

Bible & Test
Thessalonians

6 c. 13

5

A

PARAPHRASE AND NOTES ON St. PAUL's II^d EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS: IN

Imitation of Mr. LOCKE's Manner.

To which are annexed,

Two brief DISSERTATIONS,

I. Concerning the Kingdom of GOD, 2 Thess. i. 5.

II. Concerning the Man of Sin, &c. 2 Thess. ii. 3, &c.

By the AUTHOR of the PARAPHRASE and NOTES on St.
Paul's Epistles to Philemon, and 1st to the Thessalonians.

L O N D O N :

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THE
HISTORY and SYNOPSIS
OF
St. PAUL's II^d EPISTLE
TO
The THESSALONIANS.

*Written
from Cor-
inth, a-
bout the
end of the
year of our
Lord 52.
of Claudi-
us 12.*

THAT St. PAUL planted the Christian church at *Theffalonica*; that *Silvanus* and *Timothy* were his attendants, and assisted him in that work; and what sort of treatment they met with, both from the *unbelieving Jews* and *Gentiles*, and from the *Christians*, has been related at large in the *History prefix'd to the former Epistle*.

In that 1st Epistle (which was written from *Corinth*, in the year of our *Lord 52.* of *Claudius 12.*) THE APOSTLE had expressed a great desire to return, and make the *Theffalonians* another visit, in order to comfort them under their persecution, and farther to instruct them in the Christian doctrine. But hitherto he was prevented.

Having therefore received an account of the effects of his *former letter*, and a farther account of the state of that church (as appears from *chap. i. 3.* and *ii. 2.* and *iii. 11.*) he writes *this second Epistle*, within a few months after the first, whilst he himself continued at *Corinth*, and *Silvanus* and *Timothy* remained there with him.

I reckon that *this second Epistle to the Theffalonians* was written not long after the first; because St. PAUL has taken no notice of the *unbelieving Jews* having hurried him before *Gallio* (which is

2 THESSALONIANS.

An. Christi particularly mentioned by St. Luke, *Acts xviii. 12, &c.*) though Claud. 12. ^{52.} perhaps he saw the storm approaching, and hints at it, *2 Thess. iii. 2.*

In the history of St. PAUL's planting the gospel at *Theffalonica*, *Acts xvii. 1, &c.* we find that some Jews, and many devout Gentiles imbraced the Christian religion; but there is nothing said there of the conversion of any *idolatrous Gentiles*: It must therefore, at the first view, appear very strange, that *these two epistles* should nevertheless be written to *converts* from among the *idolatrous Gentiles*. Why St. Luke took no notice of their conversion, has been accounted for, p. 3. of the *History* prefixed to *1 Thess.* And from that *History*, and the *Synopsis* that follows, I think it plainly appears, that St. PAUL wrote chiefly, if not altogether, to such converts.

Upon reviewing this remarkable circumstance, I can find nothing said, in the *epistles* themselves, to or of any other sort of Christians at *Theffalonica*. And as it is said, *1 Thess. i. 9, 10.* that the persons to whom *these two epistles* were written, had turned from *idols* to serve the living and true GOD, and to wait for his son JESUS CHRIST to come from heaven as saviour and judge,— I think the APOSTLE has determined to *what sort of converts* he was here writing.

Had we the account which St. PAUL received, or any other authentic history of the particular circumstances of this church, since the writing of the former *epistle*; we might, no doubt, much more exactly point out the propriety and emphasis of the several parts of *this second Epistle*.

But, as we have no such *history* now remaining, the only thing we can do, is to compare *the two epistles* themselves, and carefully observe wherein they correspond, and wherein they vary. For,

We may reasonably presume, that what *the first epistle* had done effectually, THE APOSTLE would not go to do over again: Tho' 'tis highly probable, that, when he wrote a *second epistle*, he would commend them for what they had done right, in order to confirm and encourage them to proceed; that, if in any thing they had mistaken his meaning, he would, with all meekness and readiness, set them right; that, if in any respect any of them were grown worse, he would more severely reprehend them.

With this light in our hand we may possibly find out our way through the history of the state of this church, at the time of the writing *this second epistle*.

They

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They had now for some time profes'd the Christian religion ; An Christ
and therefore he does not (as in *the first epistle*) enlarge upon the ^{52.}
reception, which the gospel had met with, upon its first appear- ^{Claud. 12.}
ance among them, nor upon his own planting it with the most
disinterested views, and amidst so many and such great discour-
agements.

The persecution that arose from *the unbelieving Jews* seems to
have been somewhat abated ; and therefore he says less in *this
epistle* of their malice and virulence : But yet, as they had not
wholly ceased to molest the *Christians*, he (after an *introduction*
like that in *the former epistle*) does again commend the *Theffalonians* for
their stedfastness in the Christian religion ; for their
patient suffering for the cause of Christianity ; and that (under
all their difficulties and discouragements) their holiness and char-
ity still increased. Upon such accounts (as he tells them) he
often spoke with pleasure, *in other churches*, about his converts
at Thessalonica ; and assures them, in a very solemn manner, that
the **LORD JESUS CHRIST** would finally come to their great joy,
but to the destruction of their enemies and persecutors : And, that
he frequently pray'd to **GOD** that they might persevere, and find
mercy with their great Judge at the last day. But,

As he found that his discourse concerning the sudden and surprizing approach of *that day*, had been misunderstood ; he takes particular care to acquaint them in *this second epistle*, that they had mistaken his meaning, if they had concluded from any thing that he had said, or wrote, that *the coming of the LORD was then just at hand* : And he seems to have been very solicitous to set them right in this particular ; for if men expected that the *day of judgment* would happen speedily, it would almost put a stop to all temporal affairs ; and, we cannot tell how far this mistake might influence such among the *Theffalonians* as were before disposed to be idle, and to neglect their temporal concerns ; for we shall find as we proceed, that they were actually grown worse : And besides, when they found the event did not answer their expectations, they might possibly have been tempted, all of them, to have thrown off the Christian religion intirely, and even the very profession of it, as concluding that the whole was as groundless and delusive as the false or mistaken propheey, that had raised such an expectation of the speedy coming of the day of the **LORD**.

Though

An. Christi Though therefore he had in the first epistle kept in generals,
 Claud. 12. ^{52.} about the sudden approach of *that day*, and had only warned them
 to prepare for it, how nigh or distant soever it might be, he now
 assures them that there was to be a grand apostasy ; that *the man*
of sin and son of perdition was first to appear even in (the very Christian church) the temple of God ; and that the *apostasy* would
 be so general, that none but the sincere and stedfast lovers of truth
 and virtue would escape the delusion and the punishment that
 would follow. But,

In the mean time the APOSTLE, by hoping so well of the *Theſſalonians*, took the most agreeable method to confirm their faith and virtue, patience and stedfastness ; for he was anxiously concerned, lest this mistake, or any thing else, should unsettle them, and make them apostatize, and so they (after all his pains and care) should be found among *the rejected* in that signal day.

Though the malice of *the unbelieving Jews* towards the *Christians* at *Theſſalonica*, seems to have been, in some measure, abated, yet their enmity to St. PAUL did still abound in every place. He therefore (as he had so often and so earnestly pray'd for them) does here again desire the *Christians* at *Theſſalonica*, to pray for him, that he might be vigorous and successful in spreading the Christian religion through the world, and that he might be preserved from the power and malice of wicked and unreasonable men, alluding (I suppose) to his treatment at *Theſſalonica* ; and perhaps (as has been already hinted) he foresaw another storm approaching, which did come on with great fury ; but by the favour of a kind providence blew over without doing him any harm, *Act. xviii. 12—18.*

Whether the APOSTLE (after all his earnest desires to see them again) despair'd of returning to *Theſſalonica* for some time, or thought them sufficiently established by what he had done already, or reckoned that he had said enough concerning that desire and intention of his, and that to have said more would have been improper, unless he had had a fair prospect of returning shortly— Whatever was the reason, I say, the APOSTLE takes no notice in *this epistle* of his purpose or desire to visit them again in a little time. He did indeed visit them once or twice after this (see *Act. xx. 1, 2, 3.* and the note on *1 Theſſ. iii. 11.*) but that was at the interval of four or five years ; and therefore he had not the prospect of it when he wrote *this epistle*.

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He had given them such close and pressing dissuasives from all manner of uncleanness, *1 Thess. iv. 5—8.* And,

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Claud. 12.

From the glorious prospect of the resurrection, and the consequent state of virtue and happiness, had so convincingly argued against their sorrowing for their deceased friends, like their idolatrous neighbours, who had no such hopes, *1 Thess. iv. 33, &c.* — That he did not see occasion to add any thing upon either of these subjects.

He had also (*1 Thess. v. 12, 13.*) admonished them of their want of deference towards such as *presided* over their religious assemblies, and who regulated their worship, but especially the public exercise of their spiritual gifts: And, as he is wholly silent about that matter, in *this second epistle*, we may reasonably presume that they were either reformed in that particular, or in a likely way to reform.

They had not in the least diminished in their love to one another, but rather increased in their benevolent temper, since their imbracing Christianity, and even since the writing of the *former epistle*; and therefore he now commends them upon that account, in order to confirm and encourage them to persevere. But,

As he had briefly and gently admonished some idle and disorderly persons among them to mind their own proper business, and to use such care and diligence as that they might make a decent provision for themselves, recommend to the world the Christian religion, which they had so lately imbraced, and do something that would turn to the good of the community, *1 Thess. iv. 11, 12.* And, as they had not comply'd with the admonition, and reformed, but were rather grown worse; —

He therefore, in *this second epistle*, speaks more particularly and sharply against such a behaviour; acquainting them, that the neglecting their own proper affairs, and going about from house to house, and officiously meddling with other people's concerns, was a disorderly way of living, that tended greatly to the scandal of Christianity, as well as to their own and other people's detriment. He puts them also in mind of his own example (as he had done, though with a different view, in his *former epistle*) and how *He, Silvanus, and Timothy*, had worked with their own hands for a subsistence, whilst they were planting the gospel at *Theffalonica*: And, as the *Theffalonians* had been eye-witnesses of that their behaviour, it became them most carefully to imitate so good an example.

2

But,

An. Christi But, if upon such repeated Admonitions, they would not reform, he advises the other Christians at *Theffalonica*, to disown them, and to use all the most prudent and likely methods to bring them to shame and repentance.

Claud. 12. He concludes with sending salutations, and with writing his name in some very particular manner, to distinguish his *genuine epistles*, from any that might be counterfeited under his name.

He (most probably) wrote his name in the very same manner in the conclusion of *the first epistle*; for he himself says (2 *Theff.* iii. 17.) *That that was the token in all his epistles*, whereby they might be known to be his: But he now speaks of it, as if he had suspected that some *epistle* had been dispersed among the *Theffalonians*, that was pretended to be his, and in which it was expressly said, *That the day of the Lord was then just at hand*: Tho' the suspicion was not so strong, but that he seems to have been very dubious whether their mistake had been occasioned by their misunderstanding some expressions in his *first epistle*, or by an impostor's forging *an epistle under his name*.

This appears to have been wrote the second of St. PAUL's thirteen *epistles*.

By whose hand it was sent does not now appear; but THIS GREAT APOSTLE did not want messengers, attendants, and persons ready to minister unto him.

Thus, I think, we have taken the only way, now left, of coming at the history of the state of this church at *Theffalonica*, when the APOSTLE wrote this *second epistle*.

And, it appears that the main point, about which he wrote, was to rectify a mistake concerning the coming of the day of the Lord; a mistake, which (if not rectified) might have proved of dangerous consequence!

But he hath also added other things of considerable importance; and particularly, that of reprimanding the idle and disorderly persons, who instead of reforming were grown worse. These two points he more especially labours, that he might prevent the ruin, or great decay of Christianity at *Theffalonica*.

And, 'tis to be hoped that *this epistle* had the desired effect; for there was a Christian church at *Theffalonica*, some ages after this.

THE
PARAPHRASE
AND
NOTES, &c.

SECT. I.

The INTRODUCTION.

Chap. i. Ver. 1, 2.

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Claud. 12.

TEXT. PARAPHRASE.

PAUL, and Silvanus,
and Timotheus, unto
the church of the Theffalo-
nians,

PAUL^a, who planted the everlasting gospel among you, together with ^bSilvanus and ^cTimothy, who were with me at ^dTheffalonica, and my assistants in that work, now write a second letter to ^ethe church lately founded there, who are ^fdistinguished from the idolatrous

Chap. I.
I.

N O T E S.

^a See Note (^a) on *Philemon*, ver. 1.

^b See Note (^b) on ⁱ*Theff. i. 1.* And, to what is said there, I would add, that I take *Silvanus* to have been a freeman of *Rome*, as well as St. *PAUL*, and that this was his *Roman*, and *Silas* his *Jewish* name. See *Acts* xvi. 37, where he is called a *free Roman*. In writing to *Christians* that had been *Gentiles*, and that lived in a *Roman province*, St. *PAUL* the *APOSTLE*, and *Silvanus* the *Evangelist*, very properly use their *Roman name*.

^c See Note (^c) on ⁱ*Theff. i. 1.*

^d See Note (^c) on ⁱ*Theff. i. 1.*

^e See Note (^d) on ⁱ*Theff. i. 1.*

^f See Note (^b) on ⁱ*Theff. i. 1.*

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Claud. 12.

Chap. I.

PARAPHRASE.

trous Gentiles, by their believing ^e in the one true GOD, even our Father; and who are distinguished from their fiercest enemies the *unbelieving Jews*, by their believing also in the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

2. ^h We wish you favour and all imaginable happiness from those glorious and excellent persons in whom you believe, and whom you make conscience to worship, imitate and obey, i. e. from GOD, even our Father, and from the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

TEXT.

nians, in GOD our Father, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST:

Grace unto you, and peace ^z from GOD our Father, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

NOTE S.

^s Ἐν Θεῷ Πατέρι ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησῷ Χριστῷ. In GOD our Father, and in the LORD JESUS CHRIST.] This shows that the APOSTLE did not design to say, GOD the Father of us, and of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. (Though that is like an expression which OUR LORD himself uses, John xx. 17.) But ^z is to be understood before κυρίῳ here, as I suppose ^w to be understood before κυρίῳ, ver. 2. and 1 Thess. i. 1.

Such persons as would see this observation farther confirmed, may compare with this place, 1 Tim. i. 2. 2 Tim. i. 2. and 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.

^z. ^h See Note (f) on 1 Thess. i. 1.

SECT. II.

Chap. i. Ver. 3 — 12.

CONTENTS.

IN this Section he repeats the substance and main design of the first epistle, which was to confirm them in their Christianity, and in their patient suffering for it; and the great argument he here makes use of, is, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST would come as universal judge; and that then he would punish their enemies and persecutors, and make them happy.

TEXT.

2 THESSALONIANS.

II

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth :

4 So that we our selves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.

5 Which is a manifest token

We frequently ⁱ praise God upon your account ; and indeed, 'tis proper, and even our duty to do so, in as much as we understand (since our writing the former letter) that your ^k faith and stedfastness in the Christian religion increases exceedingly, even though you daily suffer upon that account ; and that your mutual love and charity abounds and overflows, which is highly becoming Christians, and exactly agreeable to the spirit and temper of the gospel of CHRIST.

Nay, such indeed is your conduct that we frequently ⁱ glory in it, and mention it to your honour in the other Christian churches, particularly at Corinth, where we now are, often putting them in mind how patient and stedfast the *Theffalonians* are, under all the persecutions and injuries which they suffer for their Christianity.

And, what a glorious ^m proof is it of God's

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Chap. I.
3.

4.

5.

NOTE S.

3. ⁱ See Note on *Philem.* ver. 4. and Note (^k) on ¹ *Theff.* i. 2.

^k The Christians at *Theffalonica* seem to have been remarkable for their patience and stedfastness, as well as for their mutual love and affection, ver. 4, 5.

¹ *Theff.* i. 3; 6 — 10. and ii. 14. and iv. 9, 10.

4. ¹ Compare ver. 11. with this verse, and you'll find that here is an instance of his commanding them in order to encourage and more effectually persuade them still to be advancing. Such instances may be found, ¹ *Theff.* i. 3 — 10. and ii. 19, 20. ² *Cor.* vii. 14. and ix. 2. *Philem.* ver. 5, 6, 7. compared with 8, 9, 10. See Note (^f) on ¹ *Theff.* iv. 1. and the contents of Section iv. there. From this text it is worth while to observe this APOSTLE's skilful and happy address ; he raised the emulation of other churches, by commanding the *Theffalonians* ; and he again quickens the *Theffalonians*, by acquainting them how much he had praised them in other churches.

5. ^m Dr. Mills informs us, that St. Ambrose, Theophylact, the Vulgar and Syriac versions, all read εἰς ἑρεμα, which will better connect this with the preceding verse. So *Rom.* iii. 25. εἰς ἑρεμη, &c.

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Chap. I.

PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

God's judging ^a right, and that he is no respecter of persons! What an evidence of the exactness of his prescience, of his perfect knowledge of the hearts of men, and of his kind and impartial regard to virtuous persons of every nation! that he should honour you (that were formerly *idolatrous Gentiles*) with being admitted as members of his *spiritual kingdom*, and so put you in the sure way to attain the everlasting inheritance! — Even you, I say, who have in the event fully manifested the wisdom of his choice, and given the surest proofs of your own sincerity and fidelity, by suffering so soon, and persevering so patiently and steadfastly in the Christian faith, notwithstanding

ken of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the

king-

NOTES.

^a The APOSTLES by the (*τὸ πνεῦμα*) *spirit of illumination*, were directed to whom and how long, as well as what they should preach: For the spirit knew the probity of every man's heart; and consequently knew (*ἀκελῶς*) with the greatest exactness, what success they would every where have, and what the event would be.

In particular, he foresaw how the *Thessalonians* were prepared for the reception of the gospel, and how proper it was to admit them into the *kingdom of God*: And the event verified the justness of his judgment.

By (*τὸ δορύφων τὸ δικαιοῦ τὸ Θεοῦ*) a manifest token of the righteous (or impartial) judgment of God, I think the APOSTLE refers to God's rejecting the wicked Jews, and taking the well-disposed *Gentiles* into his *kingdom*, under the *Messiah*. What ST. PETER says concerning the devout *Gentiles* being received into the *Messiah's kingdom*, *Acts* x. 34, 35. *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation (as well as among the Jews) he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him;* and, *1 Pet. i. 17. If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, &c.* ST. PAUL applies to the converts from among the *idolatrous Gentiles*, *Rom. ii. 6* — *to* where he assures them that God would render unto every man according to his deeds, whether he were Jew or Gentile; *For (says he) there is no respect of persons with God. His kingdom, under the Messiah, is a spiritual kingdom; and virtuous persons of all nations are meet to be partakers, but not wicked persons of any nation.*

This is *τὸ δορύφων τὸ δικαιοῦ τὸ Θεοῦ*. See Note on *1 Thess. i. 4.*

on

x.

6. 9 Ver.

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Chap. I.

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

- kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer : but you will also
 6. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you ; to those
 7. And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in him
 8. In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know

the violent opposition and great discouragement you have met with !

And let not your faith and patience fail you, for that wise and just God, who proportions things to persons, and persons to things, has set rewards over against virtuous sufferings, and punishments over against triumphant wickedness ; and will think himself concerned, sooner or later, to rectify the disorders of the present state, to punish those that now persecute you, and to grant unto you, that are at present persecuted for righteousness sake, full deliverance, and compleat glory and happiness with us, in that great and solemn day, when the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven in a pompous and triumphant manner, as universal judge, adorned with the greatest glory and splendor, and attended by all his illustrious and mighty angels.

And when he, in this magnificent manner, comes down to judgment, and the whole

NOTE S.

6. ^o Ver. 8, 9. Zech. vii. 10; 13. Matt. xxv. 41—46. Luke xviii. 7. Rom. ii. 2—6; 8, 9. and xii. 19. Jude ver. 14, 15. Rev. vi. 10. and xvi. 6.

7. ^p Aron, relaxation, i. e. from your present sufferings, along with which God will also bestow positive compleat happiness, ver. 10. Wisd. v. 1; 5; 15, 16. Matt. v. 10, 11, 12. and xxv. 34—40; 46. Rom. ii. 7; 10, 11. and viii. 17. and ix. 23. 1 Cor. xv. 19; 29, 30, 31, 32. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. Phil. i. 38. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. and iv. 8. Heb. xi. 6. James i. 12. 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. and v. 10. Rev. ii. 10. and iii. 4, 5. and vi. 11.

8. ^q The sight of the Shechinah (or cloud of glory) in which our Lord will appear at the last day, will be as dreadful to his enemies as it will be joyous to his sincere friends and disciples.

As to the cloud of glory, see Isa. iv. 5. Acts i. 9. and vii. 30. in which texts its mild and benign appearance is spoken of ; but the prophet speaks of its dreadful appearance, Isa. xxix. 6. as does the Psalmist, Psal. xviii. 6—15. They both

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Claud. 12.

Chap. I.

PARAPHRASE.

- whole world is summoned before his awful tribunal ; then will he render unto every man according to his works — unto the *idolatrous Gentiles*, who will not acknowledge the one true GOD, and who have been excited by the *Jews* to persecute you ; and, unto the *unbelieving Jews*, who have excited the *Gentiles* to persecute you, and have themselves refused to obey the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST — Unto both of them will be render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, even banishment from the presence of the LORD, and a proper punishment which will be inflicted by his mighty and glorious power.
- But, he will come in that signal day to be honoured by all righteous and holy persons, and to be admired for his holiness and impartial justice, his mighty power

TEXT.

know not GOD, and that obey not the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST :

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of his power ;

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our

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both are joined together, *Matt.* xvi. 27. and xxv. 31, &c. *Mark* viii. 38. *Luke* ix. 26. *Rev.* i. 7. in all which last mention'd places 'tis considered as a transporting sight to the pious, but a terrible one to the wicked.

It should seem as if the holy angels were to constitute the *cloud of glory*, *Psal.* civ. 3, 4. And then μετ' ἀγγέλων συρριετες ἀντει τοιεὶ φλόγῃ, ought, perhaps, to be read in one continued sentence.

But if his coming (τοιεὶ φλόγῃ) in flaming fire, relate to his punishing the wicked with fire ; then see *Matt.* v. 22. and xviii. 8, 9. and xxv. 41. *Mark* ix. 43 ; 45. *Heb.* xii. 29. 2 *Pet.* iii. 7.

I incline rather to take it in the former sense.

¹ See Note on ver. 6.

² *Psal.* lxxix. 6. *Gal.* iv. 8. *Eph.* ii. 12. 1 *Theff.* iv. 5.

³ *Acts* xvii. 5.

⁴ *Matt.* xxv. 41. with this place compare *Isa.* ii. 19 ; 21. and *Rev.* vi. 16, 17.

⁵ The glory of his power, or his glorious power ; see Note (n) on 1 *Theff.* i. 3.

^{10.} Either εἰ τὴ μῆτη, must, in construction, be placed at the beginning of the verse, or else we must suppose (as *Grotius* does) that the APOSTLE'S meaning was, that the gospel, which he preached among the *Theffalonians*, will

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Chap. 12.

our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

¹¹ Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our GOD would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power :

¹² That the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace

power and amazing goodness, by all them that have believed and obey'd him ; among which happy number you may expect to be found, as you so chearfully imbraced the first offers of the gospel, and have since lived so much under the power and influence of it (for the truth of what we preached among you will *that day* be confirmed, as well as the propriety of the places where, and the persons to whom we preached ; and all the most glorious promises of our gospel will be fully accomplished in their season.) And, in order to your being of that happy number, we pray constantly, that our GOD^{*}, who hath called you out of the midst of an idolatrous and wicked world, into the Christian church, would animate you to behave worthy of such an unspeakable favour ; and that he would, by his mighty power, perfect all his own kind and merciful designs, and the proper fruits of your faith ! — That the honour of Christianity may be advanced in the world, and the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST glorified by your holy lives and patient suffering for your religion ! and that you your selves may at present be supported, and at last made glorious and happy by and through him, according to that gracious purpose

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of

NOTE S.

will be confirmed by the supreme Judge at the last day. And Beza says, that the Syriac version read ὅτι τισεύθησαν, &c. which confirms Grotius's interpretation.

What day is here referred to may be seen more fully in Note on chap. ii. 2.

^{11.} Ver. 5. See Note (c) on 1 Thess. ii. 2.

^{12.} See

2

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52.

Claud. 12.

PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

Chap. I. of GOD^a, and of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, which is now so fully revealed to mankind by our preaching the everlasting gospel.

grace of our God, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

N O T E S.

^a See Note (^b) on 1 Thess. i. 1.

S E C T. III.

Chap. ii. 1 — 17.

C O N T E N T S.

HAVING in the former Section mentioned the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, he here gently slides into the main design of this epistle, which was to rectify a mistake, that either some weak or designing persons had spread among the Thessalonians, viz. That St. PAUL thought the day of the LORD to be just at hand; and that he had intimated so much either in his discourse at Thessalonica; or had, since his being there, had a revelation concerning it, with which he had acquainted them by an epistle, since he left them.

He now assures them that he neither said nor designed to say any such thing; but, on the contrary, had formerly told them, and now tells them again, that a grand and remarkable *apostasy* was first to happen in the Christian church: And, intimates that he hoped neither this mistake, nor any thing else would so stagger them as to indanger their Christianity and their final acceptance with God.

TEXT.

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

^{1.} NOW we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and by our gathering together unto him,

^{2.} That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of CHRIST is at hand.

Let

Having already taken notice of the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to your great joy, and to the destruction of your enemies, I have something more to say concerning it; and would beseech and adjure you ^b by that awful coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and by the hopes which you have of being then gathered together with the righteous, and meeting him with comfort and acceptance in that solemn day — That you would not so soon give up those right sentiments, which you received from us, or be so easily perplexed and disturbed by the groundless insinuations of such persons as pretend to say, That, by any of our discourse whilst we were at Thessalonica, or by immediate revelation since we saw you ^c, or by the epistle which we have sent you; we had declared that the ^c day of the LORD JESUS CHRIST,

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I.

2.

NOTE S.

1. ^b Dr. Mills says, That two MSS. and the Ethiopic version read *μετα* instead of *ὑπερ*; and indeed the word *ὑπερ* it self, with a genitive case after it, does often signify about, or, concerning; Rom. ix. 27. 2 Cor. i. 8. and viii. 23, 24. 1 Thess. iii. 2. and in many other places: Yet I rather incline to think that *ὑπερ* is here put for *σια*, and to understand it as a solemn adjuration to raise their attention by the prospect of that great and glorious day of the LORD: This was a common thing with St. PAUL, when he was about to say a thing of great importance, 1 Cor. xv. 31. 1 Thess. v. 27. 2 Tim. iv. 1. and it could never have been used more properly than here, where he had such momentous things to say about that great day.

^c Matt. xxiv. 31. and xxv. 34. Mark xiii. 27.

2. ^d See 1 Thess. iv. 15. and Note (*) upon it.

^e — Ως δι ενεγκινησε τον Χειραν, — As that the day of CHRIST is at hand;] That this day of CHRIST cannot refer to his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, will plainly appear if we look into the rise and progress of this part of St. PAUL's epistles, 1 Thess. iv. 13, &c. He had admonished the Christians at Thessalonica against lamenting over their dead, as they used to do whilst they were Heathens; to prevent which for the future,

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CHRIST is at hand! No, false prophets may, perhaps, forge letters under our name; or pretend to speak by order and authority from us; yet you need not in-

danger

PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

Let no man deceive you;

by

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he puts them in mind of the Christian promise of a glorious resurrection to an eternal life of perfection and happiness. When that resurrection from the dead will be, he also informed them, *1 Thess. iv. 15, 16*, viz. at the coming of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; then shall such of the Christians, as shall be found alive upon earth, be transformed, and the dead raised, and the righteous be all made happy.

Having mentioned that coming of the LORD, or of the day of the LORD, he, in the beginning of the fifth chapter, goes on with his discourse about that day, assuring them that whenever it did come, it would come suddenly and surprizingly: And that, as the particular time was unknown, men ought always to be prepared. But he said nothing there, how nigh, or how distant, he apprehended it to be.

About the coming of this very day of the LORD St. PAUL had been informed that they had either misunderstood his meaning, or been imposed upon by some weak or designing men, who had asserted it, as his opinion, that that day was then just at hand. To rectify which mistake was the chief design of this epistle; in which he here lets them know, that a grand apostasy was first to happen; and therefore that day was at a distance; and that he had told them as much, when he was at *Bethsalonica*; to which prophesy, if they had carefully attended, they could not so widely have mistaken his meaning.

If therefore that day, and the day (or coming) of the LORD, *1 Thess. iv. 15, &c.* and *v. 1, &c.* ought to be understood of the day of judgment, that tremendous day, when CHRIST shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God, when the dead shall be raised, and the living transformed; I think 'tis plain that it ought so to be understood here also: For of the same day, and the same coming of the LORD, he appears in both epistles to be speaking. And (though what has been said may be sufficient to determine the sense of the phrase, in this place) I would over and above add, that by that day, or the day, or coming, of the LORD is generally meant, his coming to judge the world, *Mat. xxv. 31, Acts xvii. 37, 1 Cor. i. 8, and iii. 13, and v. 5, and xv. 23, 2 Cor. i. 14, Eph. iv. 30*, compared with *Rom. viii. 23, Phil. i. 6, 10, and ii. 16, 1 Thess. ii. 19, and iii. 13, and v. 23, 2 Thess. i. 10, 2 Tim. i. 12, 18, and iv. 8, 2 Pet. i. 19, and ii. 9, and iii. 4—10, 12, 1 John iv. 17, Jude ver. 14, &c.* and many other places, where phrases of the same import are made use of, as *1 Pet. i. 7, 13, &c.*

3. f There were persons in the APOSTLES days that falsely pretended to have received orders, or revelations from them, *Acts xv. 1, 24, 2 Pet. ii. 1, 1 John ii. 19, and iv. 1*. The Old Testament prophets were thus mimicked, in order to delude the people, *Jerem. xxix. 8, 9, and our Saviour prophesied that such would arise after him, Mat. xxiv. 4, 24*. Accordingly, St. PAUL in general terms

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PARAPHRASE.

by any means : for *that day* danger your Christianity by looking for what will not happen, but may possess your souls in patience, and with composure and diligence mind you own lawful and

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NOTES.

terms admonished the *Theſſalonians* (1 Theſſ. v. 21.) to prove all things, in order to hold fast that which was good.

And, that epistles also were forged under their names, or at least that there was danger of such a thing, appears very probable from this place, compared with chap. iii. 17. Gal. vi. 11. and Philem. 19. But these places, and especially the text here shows us the APOSTLE's very great care to prevent such impostures doing any harm. Suppose St. PAUL had only feared such a thing, they that are acquainted with the *fathers*, know very well what a multitude of *gospels*, *acts*, and *epistles*, were forged under the name of some or other of the APOSTLES.

We have none that were forged in the APOSTLE's days ; but there is still extant an epistle of St. PAUL to the Corinthianſ (besides the two which we have in the New Testament) which is evidently a forgery of later ages, Jones's Canon, &c. Vol. 1. p. 173, &c. And another epistle of St. PAUL to the Laodiceans ; which is also a late forgery, being only a confused collection of sentences out of some of his genuine epistles, and occasioned (most probably) by what he himself has said, Col. iv. 16. concerning an epistle from Laodicea, which the Colossians were to get, and read in their church ; and which I take to be what is now called *The epistle to the Ephesians*. See Jones's Canon, &c. Vol. 2. p. 41, &c. And lastly, we have six of St. PAUL's epistles to Seneca (Nero's tutor) as well as eight epistles of Seneca to St. PAUL. These were a more early forgery, being extant in or before the fourth century ; and are mentioned by St. Jerome (Catal. vir. illustr. in *Senecā*) and by St. Austin (54 epift. ad *Maced.* Tom. opp. 2. p. 245.) as quoted by Mr. Jones ; and those two *fathers* had seen and read them. No person that has been conversant with the New Testament, and St. PAUL's style and manner, but, upon the bare reading of them, will easily see that they are Forgeries. They are published in Latin and English, by Mr. Jones, Canon, &c. Vol. 2. p. 64, &c. See also *Theophylact*. upon 2 Theſſ. ii. 2. p. 724. and upon cb. iii. 17. p. 737. and *Oecumen.* p. 193, and 204. I have not here taken notice of other writings that were early forged under his name, because an epistle is what the text seems more particularly concerned in ; though there was a revelation also forged under his name within the three first centuries ; and other books, with other titles, some sooner and some later.

St. PAUL speaks here as if he had been dubious, whether the mistake arose from a forged epistle, or from some expressions in his own former epistle ; if it was the latter, 1 Theſſ. iv. 15. and v. 2, 3, 4. were, probably, the passages that occasioned it ; and possibly some weak or designing persons might aggravate the thing : But we have here St. PAUL's own word for it, that he had no such meaning.

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Chap. II. and proper busines : For though we acquainted you that ^s the Christians, that are alive at the *last day*, shall not die, but be transformed ; yet we do not expect to be of that number : And, though we acquainted you that *the day of the LORD* will come suddenly and surprisingly upon a thoughtless and wicked world (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.) we never said, or designed, to say, that it would come *speedily* : Whatever discourse therefore, or revelation, any man may pretend to have had from us, or whatever they may infer from our words, do not regard them, nor suffer your selves, by any means, to be deluded by them : For (by the *word of knowledge*, 1 Cor. xii. 8. or the *discovery of the grand mysteries, which relate to the future condition of the Christian church*) God has clearly and expressly revealed to me, that before the *great day of the LORD*^b, there will happen *a grand apostasy in the Christian church* ; and—

day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be

NOTES.

^a Whether these be not some of the (*δυστὸντα*) things hard to be understood, in St. PAUL's epistles (mentioned 2 Pet. iii. 16.) which the unlearned and unstable wrested to their own destruction——deserves to be inquired.

It appears that *Hymeneus* and *Philetus* subverted some Christians, by affirming that the resurrection was then past, 2 Tim. ii. 18. And these *Theſſalonians* were in imminent danger from some who, with like groundless pretences, affirmed that *the day of the LORD was then just at hand*.

^b Make no stop after *τεῖτον*, but put a comma immediately after *ὅτι*, and understand *ἐρίσκειν* as the word to be supplied after *ὅτι*; and then the conclusion of ver. 2. and the beginning of ver. 3. will run smooth and easy, thus, *ὡς ὅτι ἐρίσκειν οὐ μέση τῷ Χειρὶ, μῆτις ψεύσας εἰπάτασθαι καὶ μηδέτα τεῖτον ὅτι* (scil. *ἐρίσκειν*) *ἴδε μή, &c.* — *Let no man impose upon you that 'tis at hand, unless the apostasy first happen, &c.* See Sir Norton Knatchbull.

^c *Ἡ ἀπόστασις, the apostasy, by way of eminence !* Sedulius mentions some copies that in his time read *ἀπόστασις, the apostate* ; Vid. Millii Prolegom. 846. But,

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be revealed, the son of perdition:

4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as

God

and there will appear in the world one, that shall deserve emphatically to be called, *The man of sin, and son of perdition*, as being the head of that *grand apostasy*, seducing men into sin, and leading them in the paths that will end both in his and their perdition.

And this shall be an eminent and remarkable part of his character, *viz.* that he shall set himself to oppose the true church and people of God, and exalt himself above all temporal magistrates, who are called *gods upon earth*, whether

prin-

4.

NOTE S.

But, suppose that be not an authentic reading, by the scope of the APOSTLE's discourse in this place, it appears that *the man of sin*, &c. should be at the head of *the apostasy*.

This (*the ἀποστασία*) *apostasy* was to be from religion (and not a revolt from any civil government.) So *ἀποστασία* signifies, *Acts* xxii. 21. and *ἀποστάσια*, *1 Tim.* iv. 1. and *ἀποστάσια*, *Heb.* iii. 12. And (not about civil government but) about religion is the APOSTLE here speaking.

¹ Οὐρθόποτος τὸ ἀμαλκίας, δὲ γὰρ τὸ ἀπωλεῖας; these are *Hebraisms*, and signify, a most eminently and notoriously wicked man, that shall perish with a remarkable destruction. See Note on *1 Theff.* ii. 18. So בָנֵי לְאַתָּם, children of unbelief, *Deut.* xxxii. 20. בָנֵי מוֹת, the son of death, *2 Sam.* xii. 5. And τοῖς υἱοῖς τὸ ἀπειθεῖας, children of disobedience, *Eph.* ii. 2. which are phrases of the same kind with δὲ γὰρ τὸ ἀπωλεῖας, the son of perdition. See *John* xvii. 12.

² Οὐρθόποτος (scil. τὸ κεῖσθαι, *1 Tim.* v. 14.) καὶ αὐτούς εἰπεν οὐρθόποτος Θεόν τὸ Σέλεσμα, ὡς αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν τὸ Θεόν καθίσται, προδοτηρία τοῦ θεοῦ οὐρθόποτος. This verse I would translate thus; Who opposeth himself to CHRIST, and exalteth himself above all that is called a god, or an emperor, that he, in the very temple of GOD, may sit upon his throne as a god, shewing that in reality he is a god.

That the same person is still spoken of, will easily appear to one that reads without minding the division into verses, which rather interrupt the sense: *The man of sin*, &c. is evidently the οὐρθόποτος, &c. *the antichrist*, who exalts himself so proudly, *Dan.* vii. 21; 25. and xi. 36. *Rev.* xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7. and xvii. 6.

^m Επὶ παῦλα λεγόμενον Θεόν, above all that is called a god.] So Θεός without the article does often signify; and here 'tis evidently distinguished from δὲ Θεός, the God, or the one true GOD. Who are meant by the persons called gods, appears *Psal.* lxxxii. 6. *Ezek.* xxviii. 2; 6; 9. *John* x. 34, 35. *1 Cor.* viii. 5.

• H

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PARAPHRASE.

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princes, kings, or even the ^a emperor, that in the ^b temple of God, the very Christian church it self, ^c under a pretence of spiritual power and dominion, he may ^d sit upon his throne, and reign as a temporal prince, shewing himself to have as much power and authority, and

God sitteth in the temple
of

NOTES.

^a Η σίκαρια, or that is worshipped.] I should rather render it, or an emperor; 'tis true, η σίκαρια signifies images, Wisd. xv. 15. and τὰ σεῖκαρια, altars, or objects of religious worship, Acts xvii. 23. but Σεῖκαρις was then and had for some time been, the Greek name of the Cæsars, Acts xxv. 21; 25. and xxvii. 1. and not only so, but Σίκαρια in this place is mentioned as explanatory of λαζύμενον Θεὸν, or rather as rising higher, and intimating that the man of sin would exalt himself not barely above such as are commonly called gods upon earth, but even above the majesty and dignity of the emperor himself, the highest of earthly gods. Accordingly 'tis Σίκαρια, and not Σεῖκαρια; for there was then but one Cæsar, one emperor; though the gods, images, and altars among the Heathens, were many; as are also the saints and angels invoked by the church of Rome, and the altars and images before which they worship. Perhaps St. PAUL would have used the word Σεῖκαρις it self, but for a reason that will be given in a Note on ver. 6. though as he has joined it with what is called a god, I think he has directed us in what sense to understand him.

^b Εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, for εἰς τὸν ναὸν, &c. So εἰς οἶνον, for εἰς οἶνον, Mark ii. 1. The Christian church is called the temple of God, or compared to a temple, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Heb. iii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 5, 6, 7. And what is most remarkable, even in the revelation of St. John, that was written some years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple there; we find him speaking of ὁ ναὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, the temple of God, Rev. iii. 12. So that this expression cannot necessarily restrict the appearance of the man of sin, &c. to Judea, and to the temple of God there.

^c Οὐ Θεὸν, as a God.] In several of the old MSS. versions, and fathers, this is omitted. Twill not make a very great alteration in the sense of this period, if it should not be retained; but I think it much more probable that it should be left out in many MSS. and versions, because the word Θεὸν occurs so often in this verse, than that it should be designedly inserted in others; especially as they could serve no purpose by it, nor could the ancients see the beauty of it, as we may that have lived to see the accomplishment; and what further confirms this is, that some of them have retained αὐτός, though they have omitted Θεὸν, and placed αὐτός before τῷ in the next sentence. See Dr. Mills on this place.

^d Καθίσαι, to sit upon his throne; so the word signifies, Rev. xvii. 15. and xviii. 7. answering to בָּיִת Psal. ix. 4. and xxix. 10. and cx. 1. Ezek. xxviii. 2. Zech. vi. 13.

2 THESSALONIANS.

23

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

of God, shewing himself
that he is God.

5. Remember ye not that
when I was yet with you,
I told you these things?

6. And now ye know what
withholdeth, that he might
be revealed in his time.

7. For the mystery of iniquity

to be really and actually none other than
a temporal prince.

Neither is this any new revelation, or
any doctrine different from what I have
formerly taught you: For you may re-
member, that when I was with you at
Theffalonia, I told you that Christianity
would have various revolutions, and meet
with various success in different times and
places; and I acquainted you with this
very *mystery* in particular, concerning
the rise of *the man of sin*, and the amazing
progress of the *apostasy*.

Nor need I again tell you what it is
that at present hinders the appearing of
this strange power upon earth; because
you your selves know it, and 'tis impro-
per for me to speak out more plainly:
But the power that at present hinders his
appearance, dominion and grandeur, will
continue to hinder, until the time ap-
pointed.

I own that the *mystery* of iniquity
does even now operate, and there is al-
ready

NOTE S.

5. Ver. 13.

6. Καὶ νῦν τὸ κατίχον, scil. Θεός μα, for that it was a person, and but one
person, appears from his calling him ὁ κατίχων, verse 7. οὐ νῦν τὸ κατίχον οἴδατε
ought to have been translated, and ye know what now withholdeth.

That the *Roman emperor* was the obstructing power, was the opinion of many
of the *antient fathers*, who lived before what I account the accomplishment;
and that it was so, appears probable from St. PAUL's covert and cautious manner
of expressing himself. But if St. JOHN, Rev. xiii. 1 — 4. and xvii. 13; 9; 18:
prophesied of what St. PAUL here intended, this opinion will be greatly con-
firmed.

7. A *mystery* is some truth as yet secret and hidden: When 'tis discovered,
then it may be called, a *revealed mystery*: And such are the *mysteries* men-
tioned in the *New Testament*; but there it commonly signifies, a *revelation* from
God of some great event, relating to the future state of the Christian church; which
was

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TEXT.

8. ready something of that " seducing, factious, uncharitable and aspiring spirit; but this is secret and almost imperceptible, and is nothing compared with what will happen when the obstructing power ^x is removed; for then shall appear, I say, in the very temple (or church) of God, that notoriously delusive and scandalously wicked power (' whom the LORD will indeed, at last, remarkably destroy, with the greatest facility, as with the ^y breath of his mouth; and will abolish his power by the brightness of his coming: But before

quity doth already work: only he who now letteth, *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the LORD shall consume with the spirit of his mouth,

and

NOTE S.

was unknown to the world before, and immediately discovered to APOSTLES only, but by them to Christians in general, to confirm and establish them in faith and holiness.

St. PAUL seems to have had more *mysteries* revealed unto him than any other of the APOSTLES, unless we except St. JOHN. See the ingenious *Miscel. Sac. Eff. II. p. 40.*

^u *Acts xv. 1; 24. 1 John ii. 18, 19. and iv. 1, 2, 3. Matt. xxiv. 4; 24. 2 Tim. iii. 1—6, &c. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, &c. 3 John ver. 10. Jude ver. 8; 19.*

^x *Μόνῳ ὁ κατέχειν, scil. Ιησοῦ.*

8. ^y This verse from *ὁ κατέχειν, &c.* whom the LORD will consume, &c. ought to be read in a parenthesis; or else the destruction, ver. 8. will be placed before his coming, and the manner of it, ver. 9.

^z If we understand the *breath of his mouth*, as the phrase is sometimes to be understood (*Job iv. 9. Isa. xi. 4. Rev. ii. 16.* compared) then it may denote the destruction of the *man of sin* himself, by some signal and immediate divine judgment. Thus *mystical Babylon, Rev. xviii. 1—24.* and the adulterous woman, *Rev. xix. 2.* and the beast, and the false prophet, *Rev. xix. 20.* shall be destroyed.

But if the *spirit of the LORD's mouth* be here understood, as 'tis *Isa. xi. 2.* compared with *Hos. vi. 5. Eph. vi. 17.* then 'twill be explained by the next sentence, and be almost synonymous with it; and both the sentences taken together will intimate, that by the preaching of the pure gospel, in its brightness and evidence, the kingdom of darkness and wickedness will be overthrown. Compare *Rev. xiv. 6, 7, 8.*

But if St. PAUL and St. JOHN prophesied of the same *apostasy*, it should seem that the *head of the apostasy* will himself be destroyed with some signal judgment; but that his kingdom will be demolished by the force of truth, and the clear and convincing evidence of the unmixed gospel of CHRIST.

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Chap. II.

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming :

9. Even him whose coming is after the working of SATAN, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders,

10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish ; because they received not the love of

fore those divine judgments, that wicked one is to be in a more signal manner revealed) whose coming will be to erect a kingdom of darkness and wickedness ; and that by the most subtle and diabolical methods : For he will even pretend to erect and support it (as the *true kingdom of God* is now actually erected and supported, *viz.*) by signs and wonders and various miracles ; though upon a more narrow search and careful inspection, they will be found to be lying wonders, *i. e.* only pretended miracles, and mere shams and impostures.

However, ^c so high will their pretensions to piety run, so cunningly will their false doctrine and miracles be contrived and disguised, as well as powerfully and eagerly defended from too close a scrutiny, such rewards will they promise the obedient, and thunder out such terrible things against the disobedient — that they will be sufficiently able to delude, and farther to corrupt, such dissolute and unthinking persons as are enemies to truth

9.

10.

NOTE S.

9. ^a Παρεστία is used here because it had been used in the 8th verse : 'Tis, with St. PAUL, a very common way to use a word which had been just mentioned in a former sentence, though frequently with some difference as to the sense.

^b Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. Matt. xxiv. 24. Rev. xiii. 13, 14. and xix. 20. Eph. ii. 2.

10. ^c Ἐν ταῖς αἰώνιοις ἀδικίαις. This is another *Hebraism*, and signifies that this apostate should establish his power by the most unrighteous cheats, and fraudulent methods imaginable : I have mentioned some few of them in the Paraphrase ; but all the delusive arts and scandalous frauds, whereby they attempt to make men religious, without virtue and piety, or to secure them heaven without personal holiness, or to damn the sincerely pious and virtuous, for not submitting to them, are practices that come under the head of the *deceitfulness of unrighteousness* !

D

11. ^d There

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PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

Chap. II. truth and holiness, and glad of any plausible and agreeable delusion.

11. As therefore they ^a love not truth and virtue, but take up with a mere empty profession of them ; God will punish them in their own way, and ^b will permit this wicked power to exert the utmost efforts and most mighty energy of error, to lead them into lies and delusions, of which they will be so exceeding fond.
12. And surely all such will most justly be condemned, who have hated the truth, and refused to receive and obey it ; and, on the contrary have been pleased with falsehood, because it supported them in their wickedness.

As therefore so signal an event, so extensive and durable an *apostasy*, is first to happen ; you need be in no anxiety about the *speedy coming of the day of the LORD* ! No, you have before you time sufficient to prepare for it ; and, above all, I would by no means have you indanger all your Christianity, by that disappointment which you must meet with, when such a great event does not happen according to your expectation.

13. But (though such as are careless and unconcerned, and much more the enemies,

of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God ^c 11 shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie :

That they all might be ^d 12 damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But we are bound to give ^e 13 thanks

NOTE S.

13. ^a There is no effectual preservative against fatal and destructive errors, but the sincere love of truth and virtue. Nor will any errors prove fatal but what are wilful and vincible.

^b Prov. i. 29. 1 Kings xxii. 8 ; 21, 22. 2 Chron. xviii. 7. compared with ver. 17 — 22. Jerem. iv. 10. and vi. 13, 14. Ezek. xiv. 6 — 9. Matt. xxiv. 5, 11, 24. Mark xiii. 5, 6. and xvi. 16. Rom. i. 21 ; 24 ; 28 ; 32. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18, 19. Rev. ix. 4. and xiii. 8.

^c All

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PARAPHRASE.

thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the LORD, because God hath from

mies to truth and holiness shall justly be condemned) we think our selves bound constantly to thank and praise OUR GOOD GOD upon your account, as you are Christian brethren dearly beloved by us, and even by the LORD JESUS CHRIST himself: For God not only determined of old, to take the *penitent Gentiles* into the *Messiah's kingdom*, but he also chose you as ^b the first fruits of

Macedo-

NOTE S.

^a 13. ^c All that he had said from *chap. i. 4.* to this place, was gently slid into, as if it had been only a digression; and, having, as it were by the by, infinuated what he chiefly intended to say, how handsomely does he wind up his discourse, and (as returning to *chap. i. 4.*) thank God again for the faith and steadfastness of the *Thessalonians*, which would end in their salvation, though so many would be led away, and perish in the *general apostasy*!

Hereby he softened the terrible things which he had said of the *man of sin, and son of perdition*, &c. and intimated in a most admirable and opportune manner, that all would not prove *apostates*; and peculiarly his *Thessalonian* converts would escape such delusions, and the condemnation that would follow. See like instances of his address, *Rom. viii. 8, 9. Eph. iv. 19, 20. Phil. i. 6. Heb. vi. 8, 9. and x. 38, 39.*

^d See Note on *i Thess. i. 4.*

^e Απ' αρχῆς, from the beginning,] may either signify, (1.) *From the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, and planting the Christian church in the world*; as it appears to signify, *i John i. i. and ii. 7; 13, 14; 24. and iii. 11. and 2 John ver. 5, 6.* Or, (2.) It may signify, *From the beginning of the world*; as it does, *i John iii. 8.*

For God had determined to take all the *penitent Gentiles* into the *Messiah's kingdom* (not only from the first planting of the gospel, as was intimated by several of our LORD's parables, but also) before the gospel dispensation commenced, as the *Old Testament* prophets had often foretold. And, if we allow the divine prescience, we may reasonably conclude this to have been a part of the original plan of the *Messiah's kingdom*. St. PETER therefore might well say, that *they were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience of the gospel, &c.* *i Pet. i. 1, 2.* which is like the expression here in the text. And St. PAUL also might as justly tell the *Christians in Asia*, that had been *idolatrous Gentiles*, that they had been chosen in CHRIST JESUS (*οἳ κατεβόλησαν κόσμον*) before the foundation of the world, that they should be *holy and without blame before him in love*, *Eph. i. 4, 5.* And indeed, these expressions are so very like to this in the text, that I am dubious whether we ought not to understand this place in the same sense.

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Chap. II. Macedonia, properly so called, and (that not in order to your perishing with the careless and the wicked, but) that you might

from the beginning chosen
you

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However, I will mention another interpretation (which pleases me much, and does not seem wholly improbable) and leave the reader to chuse which he thinks to be most agreeable to the APOSTLE's design.

Either, (1.) suppose *πρότερον* to signify the same thing with *ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν* *ἐπαγγελίαν*, in the beginning of the gospel, Phil. iv. 15. by which St. PAUL did not mean the beginning of the gospel in the world, but the beginning of it among them of Macedonia, then so called: Or,

(2.) Suppose we follow the reading of several MSS. and versions mentioned by Dr. MILLS, i. e. *πρότερον*, or *πρότερας*, in one word, which by ignorant or careless transcribers might easily be mistaken, and written in two words, *πρότερον*. Then the APOSTLE's meaning would be, "We ought to praise God incessantly, " because he has chosen you *Theſſalonians*, from the beginning of the gospel, or "as the first fruits, i. e. of that province": For *Philippi* did not anciently belong to Macedonia.

Agreeably to this sense of the words, we find it mentioned, to the honour of *Epiſtetus*, and the household of *Stephanus*, that they were the first fruits of *Achaia*, Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

This interpretation will naturally lead us back to the history prefixed to the former epistle, p. 1. where 'tis observed (from *Act*s xvi. 6. &c.) "That St. PAUL, " in his second apostolic journey, having got as far as *Galatia*, had a design first "to have gone into the proconsular *Asia*, and afterwards into *Bithynia*, to have "planted the gospel there; but by a divine impulse he was ordered to defer go- "ing to either of them: And arriving at *Troas*, he had in the night a vision; "a man in the habit of a *Macedonian* seemed to approach him, and in the Ma- "cedonian dialect to speak to him, and beg of him to go and instruct them; "for probably the all-comprehending wisdom of God saw that things were then "riper for planting the gospel in *Macedonia*, than they yet were in the procon- "sular *Asia*, or in *Bithynia*. And accordingly the APOSTLE went, attended "by *Silvanus* and *Timothy*, and then planted the gospel there". See Note on chap. i. 5. of this epistle.

So that the *Theſſalonians*, by an immediate direction from heaven, had the gospel more early than several other places. And they had the singular honour of being the first fruits in that province; so that from them sounded out the everlasting gospel in the adjacent Countries of *Macedonia* and *Achaia*. See 1 *Theſſ.* i. 8. and the Paraphrase and Note upon that place.

But their early conversion, and their being honoured with propagating the gospel in the neighbouring countries, was not all: But (as they had plainly testified the extraordinary probity of their minds, by so readily and cheerfully receiving the gospel, upon its first appearance in that province, and that notwithstanding the general prejudice against it, and the many and great inconveniences that

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TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.
14 Whereunto he called you by

might obtain this great salvation by that holiness which the gospel requires, which holiness must be founded upon a firm belief of the truth of this excellent religion.

And to these exceeding great privileges God has called you of *Theffalonica*, by my gospel in particular (for unto me has

14.

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that were likely to attend the profession of it —— As they had thus evidently manifested a most excellent disposition) they had probably, what the APOSTLE calls *τὴν ἀπαγχήν τὰ πρεμιαλότα*, the first fruits of the spirit, Rom. viii. 23, i. e. the choicest and greatest plenty of spiritual gifts. For so the first fruits, or the most early disciples which the APOSTLES made in any place, seem generally to have had.

As every thing was managed, in the old creation, with the most exact harmony and proportion; so were they in the new creation: For the APOSTLES, who were the first fruits in the highest sense, or the most early converts to Christianity, had the first fruits of the spirit, i. e. the choicest spiritual gifts, and the greatest plenty.

So also, perhaps, it was in proportion with the first fruits both of the devout and idolatrous Gentiles. And in any particular province, the first church seems to have been honoured with the most and the choicest gifts in that province.

In this view, compare the church at *Jerusalem* with the churches in *Judea, Samaria, and Galilee*; and the hints which we have concerning the churches at the two *Antiochs, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome*, with respect to the surrounding churches.

Yea, the first converts in any particular church appear (*ceteris paribus*) to have had the greatest honour and the choicest gifts in that single church; and accordingly the bishops and deacons were commonly chosen out of them.

Thus *Clemens Romanus* (the companion of St. PAUL) in his excellent epistle to the *Corinthians*, sect. 42. says, "The APOSTLES have preached to us from "the LORD JESUS CHRIST, JESUS CHRIST from GOD. CHRIST therefore "was sent by GOD, the APOSTLES by CHRIST. So both were orderly sent ac- "cording to the will of GOD. For the APOSTLES having received their commands, "having a full assurance through the resurrection of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, "and faith in the word of GOD, and a fulness of the holy Spirit, they went "abroad publishing the gospel of the kingdom that was to come; and preach- "ing through countries and cities, they appointed the first fruits of their conver- "sions to be bishops and deacons over such as should afterwards believe, having "first proved them by the Spirit.

¹ 1 Pet. i. 2. Rom. viii. 1; Eph. i. 3, 4. ¹ Theff. iv. 1 —— 7, and v. 8, 9.
² Pet. i. 5 —— 10. Rev. xxi. 27, and xxii. 14.

See Preface to 1 Theff. versus finem, and Note (*) on 1 Theff. ii. 12.

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has this great favour been granted, that I should have the first discovery of the terms upon which the *idolatrous Gentiles* should be received into the Christian church, as well as a particular message to go and preach the gospel among you of *Macedonia*) and that to this great end and purpose, that you should finally obtain salvation, even that transcendent ^k glory and felicity, which the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**, at his coming, will bestow upon all his sincere and faithful disciples; how nigh or how distant soever the time of his coming may be.

15. As therefore you have such well grounded hopes, and such an assured prospect of glory and felicity with him who is the head of all: Let not any bold pretences, or weak mistakes, unsettle or disturb you; but continue firm and steadfast in the profession, faith, and practice of Christianity, and in a patient suffering for righteousness sake, adhering ^l closely to the doctrine which you have received from us, whether ^m by our discourse,

NOTE S.

¹⁴ ^k Rom. viii. 17. ¹ Theff. v. 9. John xiv. 3.

^{15.} ^l Cor. xi. 2. and xvi. 13. Phil. iv. 1. ¹ Theff. v. 21. ver. 3; 6. of this chapter, and chap. iii. 6.

^m If one could be equally certain of the truth and authentickness of any other *apostolical traditions*, as of those contained in the writings of the **APOSTLES**; they would undoubtedly deserve a great regard. But after the **APOSTLES** had preached by inspiration, they wrote their doctrines (or traditions) under the conduct of the same infallible spirit, and that very much to prevent the *Christians* being imposed upon by other, and false traditions.

And indeed, all other traditionary doctrines and schemes of religion, besides what we have in the *scriptures*, which are the only true *apostolical traditions*, have (by being swallowed, by many, without examination, or imposed upon all by external

TEXT.

by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.

Therefore, brethren, stand ¹⁵ fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught,

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taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16 Now our LORD JESUS CHRIST himself, and GOD even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

course, whilst we were at *Theffalonica*, or by the letter which we have since wrote to you.

And may our LORD JESUS CHRIST 16. himself, and GOD, even our Father, who has loved us in a very signal manner, and has manifested that love most conspicuously, by giving us such comfortable hopes, and so entertaining a prospect, as that of a glorious resurrection to eternal happiness.— May those great and excellent persons (I say) in whom you hope and trust, comfort your hearts under your darkest prospects in this world, and establish you in every good doctrine and practice, against all the mistakes of weak persons, or delusions of impostors! 17.

NOTE S.

ternal force) been found, by frequent and fatal experience, to do more harm than good; and to bury, under an heap of rubbish, that inestimable pearl of the pure and unmixed Christian revelation.

16. ⁿ Rom. v. 5—10. Eph. ii. 4—8. 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. 1 Pet. i. 3.

17. ^o Ver. 15. 1 Thess. iii. 13. 2 Thess. iii. 3, 4. 1 Pet. v. 13.

S E C T. IV.

The 2d PART of this Epistle.

Chap. iii. Ver. 1—5.

C O N T E N T S.

HE now proceeds to wind up *this epistle*, and (as he had so often and so ardently prayed for them) He, in this *Section*, begs their prayers for him and his fellow-labourers in the gospel.

And

^{An. Christi} And (as having upon his mind a continual sense of their di-
^{12.} ^{Claud. 12.} stress) he again intimates, that under all their discouragements,
^{12.} ^{Chap. III.} they ought to remember, that though so many of mankind would
prove faithless, the LORD JESUS CHRIST would prove faithful,
and him they ought to imitate, obey, and depend upon, as well
as patiently to wait for his second coming.

PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

1. Having finished ^{the} main design of this *my second epistle*, I would repeat some particulars which I mentioned in the former, and which the state of your church does still but too much want.

In the first place (as we cease not to pray for you, *chap. ii. ult.*) I desire that you, in your prayers, would be mindful of me and my fellow-labourers, particularly *Silvanus* and *Timothy*, that we may be a publick blessing to the world, by spreading the gospel ^{with} swiftness and success, that it may run into every country and nation, and be as readily imbraced, as honourably esteemed, as sincerely believed, and as carefully practised, as 'tis among ^{you at} *Theffalonica*; and that we our selves may be delivered from the power of perverse and malicious men, particularly the *unbelieving Jews*, of whose virulence towards us for preaching the Christian doctrine, you your selves have in part been eye witnesses;

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the LORD may have free course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you; And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men

2. for

NOTE S.

1. ^{τὸν ἀπόστολον, finally.]} See Note (^d) on 1 *Theff.* iv. 1.

^a *Matt.* ix. 37, 38. *Eph.* vi. 19. *Col.* iv. 3, 4. 1 *Theff.* v. 25.

^b See Note on *chap. i. 4.*

^c *Acts* xiii. 45; 50. and xiv. 25; 53; 19. and xvii. 5; 13. and xxi. 27, 28, &c. and xxiii. 12, &c. *Rom.* xv. 30, 31. 1 *Theff.* ii. 14, 15, 16; 18.

^d *Matt.*

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PARAPHRASE.

men have not faith.
3 But the LORD is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.
4 And we have confidence in the LORD touching you, that ye both do and will do

for, though you are so wise and happy as to be influenced by it, yet all men will not be persuaded to embrace the doctrine of the gospel ^a, and sincerely obey it. But, though men prove faithless and wicked, and persecute, or deceive us, or you, never so much; let not this discourage you; for the LORD JESUS CHRIST is ^b faithful, who will (if you make conscience of persevering in his ways) establish you in your Christianity, and finally preserve you from the power and malice of ^c the evil one, and all his wicked instruments.

And we have that opinion of you as ^d Christians, that you will do so, and that the things which we have recommended,

3.

4.

NOTE S.

^a Matt. xi. 25. John iii. 18—21. and vii. 17. Acts ii. 40, 41. and xiii. 48. and xxviii. 24, 25. Rom. x. 16. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

^b Whether he here referred to the *unbelieving Jews*, who (when they ought to have encouraged and assisted him in promoting the knowledge of the true God) rejected the gospel themselves, and treacherously and maliciously opposed him in the spreading of it among others: Or, to such *false Christians* as he hinted at when he said, *That the mystery of iniquity was then working*; — cannot certainly be determined. I think the former more probable, if we consult the texts mentioned in Note ^(c) on this verse, and consider also what treatment he and his companions had lately met with from the *unbelieving Jews*, both at *Theffalonica* and *Corinth*; and what they had still just reason to fear from their rancor and ungoverned zeal.

^c See Note on chap. ii. 9. and Note ^(a) on 1 Thess. v. 10. As to the import of this verse, see 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. and x. 13. 1 Thess. iii. 13. and v. 23, 24.

^d [Απὸ τῶν πονηρῶν, from the evil one.] The Hebrews commonly speak of the Devil as the source and author of all evil (and of God, as the author of all that is good:) And when they would describe any great evil in a most emphatical manner, they mention the apostate himself. See Note on 1 Thess. ii. 18. and Matt. vi. 13. John xvii. 15. 1 John v. 18, 19.

^{4.} ^e Πατροίθεαρι εὐ κυεῖσθαι. See the Paraphrase, and chap. ii. 15. 2 Cor. vii. 16. Gal. v. 10. 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10. and v. 11. See also Note on chap. i. 4.

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Chap. III. mended, you both practise already, and will continue to practise.

5. And may the LORD JESUS CHRIST direct your ^a hearts more and more to love and obey GOD, and patiently to suffer for CHRIST's sake at present, as well as patiently ^b to wait for his second coming, how nigh or how distant soever that solemn day may be!

PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

do the things which we command you.

And the LORD directs your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST.

NOTE S.

^a 1 Cor. ix. 18, 19. 1 Thess. i. 3. and iii. 6; 13. and iv. 1. and v. 23.

^b Phil. iii. 20, 21. 1 Thess. i. 10. and ii. 13—18. 2 Thess. i. 7; 10. 2 Pet. iii. 13. Rev. i. 9.

SECT. V.

Chap. iii. 6 — 16.

CONTENTS.

ST. PAUL had (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12.) ordered the idle persons among them to work, and maintain themselves in a creditable manner.

As his directions had not been complied with, but (instead of reforming) they were rather grown worse; he here repeats what he had there said, rebuking, with more severity, such idle and officious persons, as were a scandal to Christianity, and troublesome in civil society.

TEXT.

THESSALONIANS.

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6.

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; that ye withdraw your selves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For your selves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not our selves disorderly among you,

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought

Another thing which we think our selves obliged to press with all imaginable earnestness, is this;

We have heard, that the idle and officious busy-bodies among you, are not reformed by our admonitions, but rather grown worse; as therefore they will not be persuaded to amend, and peaceably employ themselves in some honest and lawful business, — We charge the rest of you, by the love and authority of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that you would abstain from all free conversation and familiar society with them, and so testify to the world your dislike of such a behaviour; for you ought by no means to countenance them in their loose and disorderly life; a life, so directly contrary to the rules and directions which you received from us!

Nor ought the *Christian name* to suffer upon this account, for you your selves know very well that our example led you to no such thing; no, we did not live irregularly among you, eating any man's bread without paying him for it, or officiously prying into other people's

7.

8.

NOTES.

6. ^c Chas. ii. 15. ^a Thess. iv. 11, 12. and v. 14. ^b Acts xvii. 21. ^c Tim. vi. 13. See Note on ^a Thess. iv. 12.

^a See Note (^a) on ^a Thess. v. 12. and Note on v. 13. and Note (^b) on v. 27.

^b Ver. 11; 14. Rom. xvi. 17. ^c Cor. v. 9; vi. 13. ^d Job. ver. 10.

7. ^e ^f ^g ⁱ Thess. i. 6. and ii. 9, 10. compared with iv. 11. ^h Cor. iv. 12, 16. and x. ult. and xi. 1. Eph. v. 1.

^e ^g ^h ⁱ ^j ^k ^l ^m ⁿ ^o ^p ^q ^r ^s ^t ^u ^v ^w ^x ^y ^z ^{aa} ^{bb} ^{cc} ^{dd} ^{ee} ^{ff} ^{gg} ^{hh} ⁱⁱ ^{jj} ^{kk} ^{ll} ^{mm} ⁿⁿ ^{oo} ^{pp} ^{qq} ^{rr} ^{ss} ^{tt} ^{uu} ^{vv} ^{ww} ^{xx} ^{yy} ^{zz} ^{aa} ^{bb} ^{cc} ^{dd} ^{ee} ^{ff} ^{gg} ^{hh} ⁱⁱ ^{jj} ^{kk} ^{ll} ^{mm} ⁿⁿ ^{oo} ^{pp} ^{qq} ^{rr} ^{ss} ^{tt} ^{uu} ^{vv} ^{ww} ^{xx} ^{yy} ^{zz} ^{aa} ^{bb} ^{cc} ^{dd} ^{ee} ^{ff} ^{gg} ^{hh} ⁱⁱ ^{jj} ^{kk} ^{ll} ^{mm} ⁿⁿ ^{oo} ^{pp} ^{qq} ^{rr} ^{ss} ^{tt} ^{uu} ^{vv} ^{ww} ^{xx} ^{yy} ^{zz} ^{aa} ^{bb} ^{cc} ^{dd} ^{ee} ^{ff} ^{gg} ^{hh} ⁱⁱ ^{jj} ^{kk} ^{ll} ^{mm} ⁿⁿ ^{oo} ^{pp} ^{qq} ^{rr} ^{ss} ^{tt} ^{uu} ^{vv} ^{ww} ^{xx} ^{yy} ^{zz} ^{aa} ^{bb} ^{cc} ^{dd} ^{ee} ^{ff} ^{gg} ^{hh} ⁱⁱ ^{jj} ^{kk} ^{ll} ^{mm} ⁿⁿ ^{oo} ^{pp} ^{qq} ^{rr} ^{ss} ^{tt} ^{uu} ^{vv} ^{ww} ^{xx} ^{yy} ^{zz} ^{aa} ^{bb} ^{cc} ^{dd} ^{ee} ^{ff} ^{gg} ^{hh} ⁱⁱ ^{jj} ^{kk} ^{ll} ^{mm} ⁿⁿ ^{oo} ^{pp} ^{qq} ^{rr} ^{ss} ^{tt} ^{uu} ^{vv} ^{ww} ^{xx} ^{yy} ^{zz} ^{aa} ^{bb} ^{cc} ^{dd} ^{ee} ^{ff} 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PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

Chap. III. ple's affairs; but, with hard labour^b and great fatigue, and in the midst of restless and malicious enemies, we worked for an honourable subsistence, day and night, diligently and almost incessantly: And this we did that we might not be burdensome to any man, nor encourage any of you from our example, in a lazy and scandalous manner to devour other people's substance. Though our case, indeed, differs very much from that of the idle persons among you; for I could, by my apostolic power and authority, have demanded^a a maintenance; and as to my companions also, the maxim holds good, *the labourer is worthy of his hire.*

But we gave up our own just claims, to cut off all pretences to such a life from our^b example, and worked in that assiduous manner on purpose to show you how you ought to employ your selves.

For

wrought with labour and travel night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

Not because we have not power, but to make our selves an ensample unto you to follow us.

For

NOTE S.

8. ^b *Act*s xvii. 5. and xviii. 3. and xx. 34. 1 *Cor*. ix. 15, &c. 2 *Cor*. xi. 23, &c. and xii. 13. 1 *Theff*. ii. 6, 7; 9. See Note (p) on 1 *Theff*. ii. 9. and the Notes on *Philem*. ver. 18, 19.

9. ^a *Matt*. x. 10. *Luke* x. 7. 1 *Cor*. ix. 1—14. 1 *Theff*. ii. 6—10. St. PAUL would not here leave room for any person to insinuate (as we find his enemies did at *Corinth*, 1 *Cor*. ix. 1, &c.) that he knew himself not to be an *apostle* of JESUS CHRIST, and therefore he abstained from taking or demanding any thing from their church, merely for want of such an *apostolic* power. But so heartily concerned was he to spread Christianity, and so cautious and prudent in order to do it in the most effectual manner, that he refused a maintenance in the rich city of *Corinth*; and thereby prevented the *false apostles* demanding any thing under the pretext of his example. And by maintaining himself at *Thessalonica*, the metropolis of *Macedonia*, he prevented the idle *Christian brethren* there, from pleading the example of their GREAT APOSTLE, in defence of their idleness.

^b *Tutor, a pattern.]* See Note on 1 *Theff*. i. 7.

11. ¹ Hence

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TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.

12 Now them that are such, we command, and exhort by our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that

For when we were at *Theffalonica*, we observed something of this humour in some of you, and therefore we then charged you, not to maintain in idleness any of your fraternity that should refuse (when they are able) to maintain themselves in an honest and reputable way: But, though we gave you such orders when we were with you, and have since wrote to you and repeated the injunction, — yet we understand, after all, that there are some among you, who still live in a loose and disorderly manner ^m, neglecting their own proper business, and going about tatling from house to house, and officiously meddling with other people's affairs, in which they have no manner of concern:

Now, such persons we once more charge and exhort by the love and authority of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that they would not spend their time so idly, being a burden to the society, and bringing a scandal upon Christianity, which strictly enjoins all the duties of social life, and the greatest prudence in such as profess it, especially upon

11.

12.

NOTE S.

11. ⁿ Hence it appears that St. PAUL had had an account of the state of this church, since his former letter: Thereby he found that they had misunderstood him about CHRIST's coming; and that the idle persons were yet unreformed.

Without such an information he would hardly have wrote a second letter so soon; for (as we may reasonably suppose) he had said in the first all that the then state of this church required.

^m Μηδέν ἴσγαζομενες αἱλλα ὑπεργάλοπεροι, not working, but going about as busy-bodies;] So the words signify; therefore I have called them officious as well as idle persons; and indeed these two vices frequently accompany one another.

ⁿ There

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Chap. III. on its being first planted in any place:

We therefore beseech and charge them, that in a peaceable manner they would stay at home, and work at their own proper imployments, doing something that may turn to the good of the community, providing for themselves and their families, in a lawful and decent manner, and thus adorn that religion which of late they have professed.

13. For I hope, my brethren, that you will none of you ever cease to be industrious, as long as you are able to do any thing; or ever be weary of doing good to the indigent and deserving; though the loose and idle are unworthy of your liberality.

14. But if any of your church should be so foolish and obstinate as not to obey this our repeated order; be sure to

that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle,

NOTE S.

12. "There was no danger of the *Thessalonians* forgetting that *Christianity* had been lately planted among them, when St. PAUL wrote these two epistles; and therefore he has not mentioned that circumstance; but as we are apt to forget it, I have inserted it more than once; for it was actually a very material circumstance, which we ought to keep in our minds, through both the epistles, if we would put our selves in the very situation, in which the *Thessalonians* were, when the APOSTLE wrote to them.

o Gen. iii. 19. Eph. iv. 28. † *Theff.* iv. 11, 12.

13. ^a Gal. vi. 9.

14. Whether the APOSTLES had any particular orders from the LORD in such a particular case as this, or knew, from the light of nature, and the general scheme of *Christianity*, that idleness, and every vice deserved reproof, is not very material: I think the latter is most probable. But (however that be) the APOSTLES were the only persons that gave commandments or orders immediately from the LORD JESUS CHRIST, Matt. x. 40. John xvii. 6, 7, 8; 14; 26. and xx. 21. 1 Cor. vii. 6; 10. Heb. xiii. 7. Phil. ii. 12. ^b 2 Pet. iii. 2. Jude ver. 17. Others (even evangelists and prophets) received commandments from the APOSTLES, and delivered them to the world, 2 Tim. ii. 2. and iii. 14.

See Note (^c) on 1 *Theff.* iv. 8. and *Miscel. Sac.* *Eph.* i. p. 85. and *Eph.* ii. p. 46.

I

^c Some

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PARAPHRASE.

note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the LORD of peace himself give you peace always,

set a mark of disgrace upon that man, and have no intimacy with him, that by your shiness and distance, and by his being as 'twere disowned by your society, he may be brought to shame and repentance.

But I would not, by all this, be understood to mean, that I would have you treat him as an enemy, and never come nigh him, nor permit him upon any occasion, to come nigh any of you; — No, this would be carrying the matter too far; for as long as there is any hopes of reclaiming him, I would have you converse with him so far as to admonish him of his fault, and treat him as a brother Christian, with as much affection and tenderness as the case will bear.

And may the LORD JESUS CHRIST 16. himself, who is the author of peace, and lover of concord, grant, that such as reprove

NOTE S.

¹ Some would have the comma placed after ιησοῦς, and read Σια τὸν ἐμελέτην επουέδει, take notice of him by an epistle, i. e. they were to write about such a person to the APOSTLE.

For 'tis alledged that επουέδει δι ἐμελάνης, is a more usual phrase than λέγω ιησοῦς δι ἐμελάνης; and that επουέδει signifies (not to brand with Infamy, but) to show, declare, or give notice. In deference to the great men that have thus pointed, and interpreted this phrase, I will alledge what appear to me, at present, as objections; (1.) Though επουέδει δι ἐμελάνης, signify this (or it) by an epistle, may be a proper phrase; yet δι ἐμελάνης τὸν επουέδει, signify him by an epistle, is not so proper. (2.) Why may we not suppose St. PAUL to use λέγω ιησοῦς δι ἐμελάνης, as well as τὰς ὁράσεις δι ἐμελάνης ιησοῦς, chap. ii. 15. (3.) The articles are expressed in both places, τὸς λέγω ιησοῦς δια τὸν επουέδει; as if he had designed to say, This our order (in, or) by this very epistle. And (4.) Twas a very common thing for our LORD and the apostles, to give orders that the obstinate and incorrigible should, by the churches, be marked with infamy, and avoided. Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. 9; 11; 13. Rom. xvi. 17. 2 John ver. 10.

15. ¹ Lev. xix. 17. 2 Cor. iii. 7. and x. 8. and xiii. 10. 1 Thess. v. 14. Tit. iii. 10.
16. ¹ See Note (1) on 1 Thess. v. 23.

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PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

reprove may do it with prudence and tenderness; and that such as are reproved may take it kindly, and thereupon reform! and that you may always, and ^u on every side, have a well-grounded and settled peace in your church, as well as all other blessings! And may he always be with you all, to guide, direct, preserve and bless you abundantly!

NOTE S.

^u 'Εν παντὶ τεπνῷ, by all means.] In several MSS. and versions, 'tis εἰ παντὶ τοπῷ, in every place; (which the Greeks, and particularly Chrysostome explains by πανταχόθεν) As it follows, διὰ παντὸς, it seems to be the true reading, and to answer to the common phrase, semper & ubiq; i. e. always and every where.

SECT. VI.

The CONCLUSION.

Chap. iii. Ver. 17, 18.

PARAPHRASE.

TEXT.

17. Though hitherto I have dictated, and another has wrote for me; yet this that follows is the salutation of me PAUL with mine own hand; and I write it in this particular manner, that you may always know it; for so ^x I write in

The salutation of PAUL 17
with mine own hand, which
is

NOTE S.

^{17. x} 1 Cor. xvi. 21. Col. iv. 18. compare with this verse, chap. ii. 2. 'Twas always his custom to write his name thus at the conclusion of his epistles: But as they had not sufficiently attended to his writing it so in the conclusion of the former epistle, and he was a little suspicious of their being deluded by forged epistles:

2 THESSALONIANS.

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TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

is the token in every epistle :
so I write ;

18 The grace of our LORD
JESUS CHRIST be with you
all. Amen.

in the conclusion of all my *epistles*, to prevent any forged letters being imposed upon any of the *Christians* under my name. And, if you have received any letter as mine, wherein 'tis asserted that *the day of the LORD is just at hand!* you will find that it wants this mark and attestation of its being genuine ; and therefore you will know how little 'tis to be regarded.

18. May the favour of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and all the blessings that flow from his love, be granted unto you all, and that abundantly. Amen.

NOTES.

epistles : He now not only writes his name so, but likewise tells them that that was a mark of distinction. See Appendix to *Philemon*, p. 34.

18. See Note on 1 *Theff.* v. 28.

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Chap. III.

The End of the EPISTLE.

F

DIS

DISSTERTATION I.

ON

2 THESSALONIANS i. 5.

Concerning the kingdom of GOD, &c.

Ἐρδεῖγμα δικαιας χειρος του Θεου, εἰς τὸ καταξιωθῆναι ὑμᾶς διαστασιας του Θεου, ωφελης καὶ παροχής.

'Tis an instance of the impartial judgment of GOD, that you were accounted worthy of THE KINGDOM OF GOD, for which you even suffer.

U PON the creation, the whole *system* of reasonable creatures had GOD for their head and king, and paid him a voluntary subjection: They therefore might justly be called, **THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

By *revelation* we are informed, that some of GOD's reasonable creatures, called *angels*, apostatized from GOD, and set up the head of that *apostasy*, as another *king*, *lord*, or *chief*; voluntarily acknowledging his supremacy: And that he, or one of his *apostate* subjects, drew *man* over to their party.

The merciful *Father of the universe* (though he turned him out of *Paradise*, and reduced him to a state of mortality, by banishing him from the *tree of life*, yet) took a method to recover *man* to his allegiance, and to restore all such as will comply, to their happiness and immortality, or to the *inheritance of eternal life.*

As some of mankind have all along complied, and others refused to comply, there have, from the first ages, been two heads over the two opposite families.

DISSERTATION I.

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The wicked family of *Cain* were the children of the apostate; but the pious family of *Seth* were the adopted children of *God*, and are said to have called upon the name of the *LORD*, Gen. iv. 26. The two families were mixed, when the sons of *God* married the daughters of men, Gen. vi. 2, and the apostasy prevailed so much, that *Noah's* was then the only righteous family upon earth.

Upon this mixture, and spreading degeneracy, THE GREAT *God* (who had taken care to separate his family from the apostates, and who would have had them kept separate) by the most wonderful connexion between the natural and moral world, brought the *deluge*, when the sins of men were grown to so very enormous an height, and called aloud for judgment: Thereby he swept off at once that whole apostate generation; but in a miraculous manner saved righteous *Noah*, and his family, to people the earth with a pious seed.

In about nine or ten generations from the flood, a deluge of impiety had broke in again, and *idolatry* had infected the greatest part of mankind; so that once more men were, almost universally, the children of the apostate.

THEN it was that *God* singled out *Abraham*, a man of distinguished probity, and ordered him to depart out of his idolatrous country, and from his idolatrous kindred; and when he was come as a stranger into a strange land, *God* there again appeared unto him in the cloud of glory, and revealed himself to him in a most plain, remarkable, and affecting manner, that the knowledge and worship of the one true *God* might be preserved, at least in one family, and the earth not be intirely subject to the apostate.

By the remarkable and amazing providences that attended him and his descendants, particularly the family of *Israel*, they were set up as a light to enlighten the earth, exalted like a city upon an hill, an illustrious and standing monument against an apostate, idolatrous world.

When they, by their long stay in *Egypt*, were in great danger of falling into like *idolatry*, *God* brought them out by illustrious and repeated miracle; and in the solitary wilderness he formed them into a kingdom: They, by a willing subjection, becoming his people, or subjects; and he, by a peculiar covenant, becoming their Head, Lord, or King.

To that his temporal kingdom *God* gave laws by *Moses*, his servant, which were binding to that one nation. But as the

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terms of that law (viz. *Do this and live; but disobey in any particular, and die!*) were what none of them came up to; they could not thereby attain to the everlasting inheritance. And therefore it led them to look back to the *Abrahamic*, or *patriarchal covenant*, or forward to the *future kingdom of the Messiah*. For the law was only an *intermediate state*, given because of *transgressions* (or to prevent their falling into like idolatry and wickedness, with their surrounding neighbours) till *MESSIAH, the promised seed, should come*; God at that time purposing, and from time to time foretelling, that he would, at a proper season, transfer his *kingdom* into the hands of the *Messiah*, his anointed son, a most illustrious person, that should arise in that *Theocracy*, or from among his own people *Israel*; and, that under him persons of all nations should be incorporated into the *kingdom of God*; though the nation of *Israel* alone were the subjects of the *Theocracy*, or *temporal kingdom*. 'Twas also intimated that the *Messiah's kingdom* was to be a *spiritual kingdom*; for then the earth was to be full of the knowledge of the true *God*, as the waters cover the seas; by his knowledge he was to justify many; and to be a light to enlighten the *Gentiles*, as well as the glory of *God's people Israel*; to restrain transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness; to promote universal peace, justice, and charity among men. This was prophesied of, as the grand design of the coming and *kingdom of him*, who was called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Both the *kingdoms* were erected according to the counsels of infinite wisdom; and therefore both calculated exactly to answer their great end. As the wise Governor of all, at once formed the plans of both, and as we that have them both before us, upon comparing them together, find that they do actually, in many respects, bear a resemblance to each other; there is great reason to believe that this resemblance was designed, and that the one was erected as preparatory to the other.

Whether **OUR LORD** governed the *Theocracy*, as the *angel of the LORD, the angel of his presence, the angel of the covenant, the angel in which God had put his name*, and *Jehovah, &c.* is, by some, called in question: I am apt to think, indeed, that he that tabernacled in the cloud of glory, did afterwards tabernacle in our nature, *John i. 14.* but I have not room here to enlarge upon this particular. However,

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"Tis evident that at his incarnation, *for this purpose was the son of GOD manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;* and that upon his ascension, *all power was committed unto him, both in heaven and upon earth:* From which time he is plainly represented as an head, or chieftain, in opposition to him who is at the head of the *apostasy.*

The contest between the *two kingdoms* is not a contest of power with power (for if that were the case, as OUR LORD's power is infinitely superior, *Satan's kingdom* must immediately come to ruin) but 'tis a contest of knowledge, truth, and virtue, with ignorance, falsehood, and wickedness. Accordingly the one is represented as a *kingdom of darkness*, the other as a *kingdom of light*, Acts xxvi. 17, 18. Col. i. 13. As idolatry and wickedness so much prevailed, *Satan* was called, *The god of this world*, to whom the children of disobedience were subject; and the *prince, or ruler of the darkness of this world*: Nay, the *whole world was said to be subject to the wicked one*, 1 John v. 19. Him did OUR LORD judge, his works he condemned; he cast out that strong man armed, and spoiled his house; made his kingdom to fall swiftly, like lightning from heaven; and destroyed (the dominion of) him that had the power of death, i. e. *the devil.*

Every single convert that was brought over from idolatry and wickedness to the sincere love of truth and holiness, was a destroying the *apostate's kingdom*, and the promoting the *kingdom of GOD.*

That the *kingdom of GOD*, and the *kingdom of heaven*, are, in the New Testament, synonymous terms, will appear from comparing Matt. xiii. 31. with Mark iv. 30. and Luke xiii. 18, 19. for what in the first place is called, *the kingdom of heaven*, is, in the two last places called, *the kingdom of GOD*. Nay, what is called *the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xix. 23. is ver. 24. called *the kingdom of GOD.*

'Tis sometimes simply called *the kingdom*. And so the *Christian doctrine* is called *the gospel of the kingdom*, Matt. iv. 23. and ix. 35. and xxiv. 14. and *the word of the kingdom*, Matt. xiii. 19.

But, whether *the kingdom*, or *the kingdom of heaven*, or of *GOD*, be the phrase made use of; it has not one constant and uniform meaning. It may possibly sometimes include *GOD's universal government over the whole system of reasonable creatures*, whether *virtuous or not*; in which large sense *his kingdom ruleth over all*: To this his extensive *regal power* we are to ascribe his punishing the wicked,

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wicked, as well as his rewarding the righteous. And in this sense the kingdom is in the hands of the *Messiah*, *John v. 22; 29. Phil. ii. 9, 10.*

At other times it may imply *the whole system of virtuous creatures, who are now reduced under the government of the Messiah*: Though the word *kingdom* is not mentioned, yet there is something like this asserted in several places of the *New Testament*. As to the holy angels, some think this to be asserted, *Col. ii. 15.* but as to virtuous men upon earth, 'tis evident, *Col. i. 18.* and they seem both to be included, *Eph. i. 10. Col. i. 20.*

In some few places of the *New Testament* it may signify the *Theocracy*, or *God's kingdom over that one nation of Israel*, *Matt. viii. 12. and xxi. 43.* But in this sense it does not often occur. For,

As far as I am yet able to judge, it most commonly signifies *the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah*; or, *that gracious method, which God has taken, and published in the gospel, for the recovery of mankind from the general apostasy*, i. e. by sending (after many patriarchs and prophets) *his own son, as the prince and father of the last age, to bring men of all nations to repentance and holiness here, and hereafter to the inheritance of eternal life.*

'Tis sometimes called, *the kingdom of God, even the Father*; and that, (1.) Because 'twas his originally, and he gave it to the Son, *Matt. xi. 27. and xxviii. 18. Luke xxii. 29. John iii. 35. and v. 19—24. Acts ii. 36. Phil. ii. 9, &c.* And, (2.) Because at last, *the Son shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father*, *Matt. xiii. 43.* compared with *1 Cor. xv. 24.* But,

'Tis most commonly represented as the *kingdom of the Son*, because he has the immediate rule and government of it.

'Tis ascribed to both, *Rev. xi. 15.* and said, that the *kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the LORD, and of his CHRIST.*

In some texts it includes only the *preparatory kingdom*, or the *Christian church here upon earth*, *Matt. xiii. 24; 47.* This *preparatory part of the kingdom of God* is the grand receptacle of such as would most advantagiously prepare for the *kingdom of glory*; which *kingdom of glory, and compleat felicity*, is what the phrase must, in several other texts, be understood to signify, *Matt. xiii. 43. and xxv. 34.* And lastly, It sometimes includes the whole duration of this *kingdom*, i. e. as *preparatory here, and glorious and happy hereafter*: The one of these is as the aptest means to the other, which is the ultimate and best end.

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The careful reader will easily see in which of the abovementioned senses 'tis any where used, by considering the scope and connection of the several places: And ought to remember, that the *preparatory part of it* can deserve the name of *the kingdom of God, and of heaven*, only as 'tis the way and means to reconcile men to God, and to bring them to the *glorious kingdom of heaven, that inheritance of eternal life.*

In the text I apprehend it to include the whole duration of the kingdom, i. e. *both as preparatory upon earth, and glorious in the future world*; for 'tis evident, that the Thessalonians then suffered upon the account of their *Christianity*, or for their having imbraced the *preparatory, spiritual kingdom of the Messiah*, 1 Thess. i. 6. and ii. 14. 2 Thess. i. 3 — 7. But 'twas the prospect of the *everlasting inheritance*, or the *glorious and happy kingdom of God*, that animated them to suffer so bravely, and so steadfastly to adhere to the *preparatory, spiritual kingdom*, 1 Thess. i. 10. and ii. 12; 19, and iii. 13, and iv. 13 — 18. and v. 4; 9, 10; 23, 24. 2 Thess. i. 7; 10. and ii. 13, 14; 16. and iii. 3; 5.

But that this phrase, *the kingdom, the kingdom of God, or of heaven*, does not always signify, *the whole system of virtuous creatures with God at their head*, appears plainly from Matt. viii. 12. where 'tis declared that some of the *children of the kingdom* (i. e. of the *Theocracy, or temporal kingdom*, as I apprehend) shall finally be cast into outer darkness, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. And, Matt. xiii. 24, &c. the *kingdom of heaven* is compared to a field, where tare sprung up among the good wheat; and, ver. 47, &c. to a net, that catched bad fish as well as good. In these and such places, we ought to understand it only of the *preparatory part of God's kingdom*, to which hypocrites profess themselves to belong, as well as sincere Christians; and the advantages of which many bad men might have, if they would but improve them.

I have brought these observations together, that, by appearing at one view, they might mutually give light to one another; and that I might not have occasion to be frequently returning to them, in short notes, and broken, imperfect hints, where one cannot have room to handle so large a subject.

I would only add a few remarks concerning the laws of the *kingdom of God*, and who, at present, are *his people*.

The *Theocracy* (or *temporal kingdom*) was confined to one nation; and the *law of Moses* was the law of that *kingdom*. The

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death of the *Messiah* abolished, at least, the positive part of that law. And,

God had as good a right to prescribe the laws of his *spiritual kingdom*, as he had of the *temporal*; and, to accept whom he thought proper as its subjects, as well as upon what terms he saw fit.

Whilst the other nations were *idolatrous*, and subject to the wicked one, *Israel*, and all that would be subject to that *Theocracy*, were the people of God; his family, or kingdom upon earth.

Thus things stood with the two great bodies of mankind, i. e. *Jews*, and *idolatrous Gentiles*, till the coming of the *Messiah*.

When the *Messiah* came, and erected his *spiritual kingdom*, with new laws, and upon other terms,—then, the *law*, which God had given by *Moses*, ceased to be the law of God's kingdom: And, the honours and privileges of this *spiritual kingdom* were offered to all men, that would comply with the *laws* of it, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, i. e. whether they had, or had not, belonged to the *temporal kingdom*. Only the subjects of the *Theocracy* were favoured with the first offers; and the *Gentiles* postponed, till the great harvest of the *Jews* (especially in *Jerusalem* and *Judea*) was gathered in. But then, to the *Gentiles* also were the offers made, that God might either provoke the *Jews* to jealousy, and preserve them still as his subjects; or that, upon their refusal, he might have a people, and kingdom, in their stead: For all such as would not comply, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, were of course rejected from being members of the kingdom of God.

From considering mankind of old in this *ecumenical*, or *national* capacity; the subjects of the spiritual kingdom, and such as rejected it, came to be thus considered. Accordingly such phrases are used of the body of *Christians* in the *New Testament* as were anciently used concerning the body of *Jews*, the subjects of the *Theocracy*; such as the *elect* or *chosen people of God*, the *holy nation*, the *saints of the most high*, that were to take and possess the kingdom, *Dan. vii. 27.* the *holy and beloved*, &c.

But all such as will not have this man to reign over them, are aliens to the people and kingdom of God.

Men were excluded the *temporal kingdom* by *idolatry*; because it was a *Theocracy*, and *idolatry* was high treason.

Idolaters are likewise excluded the *spiritual kingdom*; and not they only, but such also as reject the *Messiah*, even the *Jews* themselves not excepted.

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In this light (upon farther considering that place) would I understand that sentence, ἐφθαστεὶς τελέσαι, (according to the vulg. γένος) ἐπ' αὐτοῖς οὐδὲν ὅργον εἰς τελέσαι, which I would translate thus; *For the wrath hath at last seized upon them*, i. e. upon the unbelieving Jews, of whom he had just been saying, *That they pleased not God, and were contrary to all men*; and, *that they had forbidden him and his assistants to preach the gospel to the Gentiles*; though it was in order to their being saved: And thus the wicked Jews compleated their own sins; *For (says he) the wrath is come upon them*, q. d. “Hitherto the Gentiles have been the children of wrath; and the Jews, for many ages, the peculiar people of God: But, now, the tables are turned; for the Gentiles have repented of their idolatry and wickedness, and submitted to the kingdom of the Messiah: And therefore (though formerly they were not his people) they are now become the people of God, and the true members and subjects of his kingdom: But, the wrath of God is come upon the unbelieving Jews (not for their idolatry, but) for their rejecting the Messiah, now he is come into the world. And they, as well as the unbelieving Gentiles, are for the future to be looked upon as the children of wrath, and aliens to the people and covenant of God.”

As God, by his infinite wisdom and goodness, has made inanimate and brute creatures as well as reasonable and intelligent, and higher, as well as lower ranks of intelligent beings; and has given different men different capacities for making discoveries in the natural as well as moral world: So may he, very consistently with the same infinite wisdom and goodness, make different discoveries, at different times, or to different persons, or nations, by immediate revelation, or authentic tradition; but, always upon this condition, that they stand accountable for their superior advantages; and use all the positive institutions of any revelation in an entire subordination to things that are of eternal, unalterable obligation, viz. justice and charity, temperance and piety.

I have said above, that the *preparatory kingdom* is the grand receptacle for such as would most advantagiously prepare for the *kingdom of glory*; and indeed, such as are more virtuous and holy, in proportion to their superior privileges in the Christian church, or the *preparatory kingdom* of God, shall be finally exalted to higher degrees of glory. But, I would all along be understood to mean, that whatever promises God has at any time made, or whatever privileges he has granted, to the professed subjects of his

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kingdom (whether under the *Theocracy*; or since, under the *spiritual kingdom* of the *Messiah*) are always to be so interpreted, as that insincere and wicked persons, of whatever family or nation, or whatever profession of religion, shall finally be cut off from the people of *God*, and excluded the *kingdom of glory*: And that all sincere and virtuous persons, who (without their own fault, and merely because of their birth, education, country, or other like circumstances) are unavoidably deprived of the advantages of the *preparatory kingdom of God*, shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and shall be accepted instead of such as had those advantages, but abused them.

Though therefore *Abraham* was singled out of an idolatrous world, and *Isaac* out of *Abraham's* family, and *Jacob* out of the family of *Isaac*, yet it was not for their own sakes only; nor would they have been blessed in consequence of such a separation, had they not been virtuous, and carefully improved their superior advantages; for, though *Israel* alone was a *Theocracy*, yet all were not *Israel* that were of *Israel*; and, though the number of them were as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant only was to be saved, i. e. such alone as were sincerely pious and virtuous.

On the other hand, there have been some remarkably wise, brave and good men, that have not had the privileges of the *kingdom of God*: *Epicetus* at *Rome*, and *Socrates* among the *Greeks*, appear to be signal Instances of this kind; and *Job*, among the Eastern nations, is an instance which the scripture mentions, and most justly applauds.

To conclude. The professed people of *God*, and the subjects of his *kingdom* have the best advantages; but at the same time *God is no respecter of persons*: For, from the creation to the consummation of all things (whether men have, or have not the advantages of the *preparatory kingdom*) in every nation, he that feareth *God*, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.

The End of the first *Dissertation*.

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Concerning the *Man of Sin*, &c.
2 Thess. ii. 3----12.

IN the former dissertation, the *apostasy* of intelligent creatures from the kingdom of GOD, was considered in the most general view of it.

At present we are to inquire into an *apostasy*, which (tho' not so general) is a most signal and remarkable one.

Since St. PAUL had left the *Thessalonians*, they had fallen into a mistake concerning the *coming of the day of the LORD*, imagining that St. PAUL thought it to be then just at hand. To rectify that mistake, he wrote this *second epistle*; wherein he acquaints them, that *that day* could not be so near; for a great *apostasy* was first to happen in the *Christian church*; and in describing the person that should be at the head of *that apostasy*, he seems to have had his eye upon *Dan. vii. 24, 25.* and *xi. 36, &c.* That *that day*, and *coming of the LORD* cannot refer to his coming to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, but must refer to the *day of judgment*, when the dead are to be raised, and the living transformed, hath been shown in Note (e) on *chap. ii. 2.* And therefore, there can be no necessity (upon that account) to look for the *man of sin*, &c. before the destruction of *Jerusalem*; as they are obliged to do, who understand this *coming of the LORD* to refer to the destruction of that city.

None of the six following interpretations of this prophesy appear to me to be well grounded.

1. *Grotius* would perswade us, that *C. Caligula* was the *man of sin*, &c. here prophesied of: But, according to all the best accounts, *this epistle* was written about 12 years after the death of that *emperor*.

2. Dr. *Hammond* would have *S. Magus*, and the *Gnosticks* to be here designed. But *S. Magus* had already shewn himself an

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enemy to Christianity at Samaria, and therefore was not yet to be revealed; and as to his conflict with St. PETER at Rome, and many of the Doctor's stories about the Gnosticks; they seem to be built upon too weak a foundation, to deserve any great regard. Dr. Whitby and Mr. Le Clerc, have abundantly confuted this interpretation.

Grotius's introducing *S. Magus*, ver. 8, 9. is as groundless; for the APOSTLE does evidently continue to speak of the same person, ver. 8, 9. that he had begun with, ver. 3, 4. And if Grotius saw that the whole prophesy would not agree either to *Caligula*, or *S. Magus*, and his deluded followers; I think he ought, in his interpretation, to have referred no part of it to either of them.

3. Others would have the *unbelieving Jews*, who revolted from the *Romans*, and the *Jewish converts* that *apostatized* from the *Christian* to the *Jewish* religion again, to be the persons here prophesied of.

Answer, What the APOSTLE is here speaking of, appears to have been an *apostasy* from *religion*; (see ver. 10, 11, 12. and Note ⁽¹⁾ on chap. ii. 3.) But, the *unbelieving Jews* could not *apostatize* from the *Christian religion*, because they had never imbraced it: And the *Jewish Christians*, that did *apostatize*, had no eminent head, or leader, that deserved the name of the *man of sin*, &c. Dr. Whitby, who is the most eminent advocate for this interpretation, plays between the two; and brings in the *unbelieving Jews* revolting from the *Romans*, or the *Jewish Christians* falling away from *Christianity*, just as may best help him out in his interpretation: Whereas the *prophesy* it self. is uniform, and describes one sort of *apostasy* quite throughout.

4. Though *Mahomet* himself did never profess the *Christian religion*, and therefore could not be called an *apostate*; yet as he made many *Christians* to *apostatize*, he might (in some sense) be said to *fit in the temple of God*: He likewise shewed himself to be, in reality, no prophet, but a temporal prince; and he rose after the downfal of the *Roman emperors*, which I take to have been (the τὸ κατέχεν) that which letted, &c.

All this may be said in favour of them that understand this as a *prophesy* of *Mahomet*. But then, (1.) Supposing St. JOHN, and St. PAUL to have prophesied of the same thing; 'tis evident that *Rome* must be the seat of this *grand impostor*, Rev. xvii. 9; 18. (2.) Whether the former answser be well grounded or no; 'tis sufficient to say, *That the wicked one was to come after the working of Satan, with*

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all power and signs, and lying wonders, &c. i. e. with great pretensions to miracles: Whereas Mabomet did not pretend to establish himself and his *imposture by miracles*: For, though several *miracles* are ascribed to him, by the fabulous and legendary writers among the *Mabometans*^a; yet their learned men renounce them all; as does *Mabomet* himself, who, in several places of his *Alcoran*, owns that he wrought no *miracles*.

5. Though *Rome beathen* opposed *Christianity* very much; and the emperors exalted themselves above all the kings and princes upon earth; yet this their exaltation was not a thing then to be revealed; neither did they *apostatize from Christianity*; nor sit in the temple of God; nor pretend to establish their power by *miracles*.

6. The *Papists*, in their annotations to the *Rhemish New Testament*, interpret this *apostasy* to be the falling away of the *protestants* from the *church of Rome*; and so (by a strange *legerdemain*) we are to be the *man of sin*, &c. or his fore-runners at least.

Whereas it does not appear that there was then any *Christian church at Rome*; nor are we united under any one common head upon earth; nor do we pretend to establish our doctrine by *miracles*, &c.

As we have rejected these misinterpretations, the next thing is to point out the *APOSTLE's* meaning. And, however difficult it may appear, upon a transient reading, to fix the sense of so short and general a prophesy as this: I will venture to say, That no *prophecy* could have been more exactly fulfilled than this hath been in the *bishop of Rome* and his adherents. And therefore, as it agrees to them, and the whole of it to them alone, there is the greatest reason to think that it was designed for them; especially as 'tis a singular event, the like to which never happened before, and most probably never will happen again.

But, let us go over the several parts of the *prophecy*:

Before the *day of the LORD* there was to happen an *apostasy*, &c. Ver. 3.

And accordingly, what an *apostasy* from the *true Christian worship, doctrine and practice*, is supported by the *church of Rome*!

Instead of worshipping God with simplicity, and in spirit and truth, they have introduced external pomp, and numberless ceremonies, that ingage the attention without mending the heart. Nay,

^a See Dr. *Prideaux's* life of *Mabomet*, p. 31.

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Instead of worshipping GOD through JESUS CHRIST (the only Mediator between GOD and man) they have substituted the *doctrine of demons*, i. e. the spirits of men departed out of this life, who (as they pretend) intercede with GOD for us; and invoke the Virgin *Mary* more frequently than GOD himself. They have not only succeeded *heathen Rome* in the seat of empire; but have also apostatized into their ^b *imagery* and *idolatry*; though they have indeed disguised it with new names, and different pretensions.

Instead of the Christian doctrine, they have (*apostatized from the faith*, and) taken from the common people the liberty of reading the *scriptures* in their mother tongue, that they might, with more ease, propagate their own delusions. For having, in a forcible and violent manner, restrained the liberty of private judgment; they have, with less difficulty, substituted (instead of the most excellent doctrine of the gospel) their own articles of faith, and the forged traditions, and lying legends of their church. And, not content barely to propagate ignorance, they have dared most impudently to command it, and called it the *mother of devotion*.

Their encouraging the *apostasy* in practice will be taken notice of, in explaining the sentences that immediately follow.

This *grand apostasy* was to proceed gradually to its height; but when it came to such a pitch, then *was to be revealed*, one that should deservedly be called, *the man of sin*, &c.

That this phrase may denote a succession of persons, one after another, though but one at a time, appears from *Deut. xvii. 14—20*. where that phrase, *the king of Israel*, must be understood not of one *king* only, but of a succession of *kings*; and from *Lev. xxi. 10. Numb. xxxv. 25; 28. Josh. xx. 6.* where the *Jewish high-priest* is spoken of as one person; though any one in the succession of *high-priests* is there meant.

And, to whom can the title of the *man of sin*, &c. so properly belong, as to the succession of the *bishops* of *Rome*, for many past centuries? There have not only been among them some of the *vilest* of mankind, notorious for their infidelity, debauchery, and all manner of wickedness: But, by their indulgences, pardons, and dispensations (which they have sold in so infamous a manner) they have encouraged all manner of *vile* and *wicked*

^b See the account given by Dr. *Middleton*, who was himself several years at *Rome*.

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practices. Instead of showing men the necessity of sincere repentance, unfeigned faith, and an holy life and conversation ; they have contrived numberless methods to make an holy life intirely needless, and to indulge men in the greatest and most abominable vices ; and yet assure them of *heaven*, even without repentence, provided they would sufficiently pay them for their admission.

The form of *indulgences* a little before the *reformation*, was so ample, that rich men were unconcerned what sins they committed ; as knowing that they could, living or dead, purchase a pardon : For suppose they neglected it in their life-time, it was but leaving so much money, by will, at their death, for masses and indulgences ; and they were assured that all would be forgiven.

The story of the *French gentleman* is well known, who, being admonished by his friend of his horrible cursing and blaspheming, answered ; “ There’s no fear, man ; Can’t I buy my pardon of “ the *Augustin Friars*? Yes, I should be forgiven for an ounce of “ gold, though I had ravish’d the *mother of God*, and cut off both “ her breasts.”

Can such notorious wickedness always escape without an *eminent perdition*?

How justly may *present Rome*, for her persecution, idolatry, and notorious wickedness, be deemed *mythical Babylon*, and (spiritually, or figuratively) called *Sodom*, and *Egypt* (where the people of *God* have been under a long and cruel bondage) *and the mother of fornications, and of the abominations of the earth*^c?

Who opposeth himself, i. e. to *CHRIST* and true Christians: Ver. 4.
And who hath done this more than the *church of Rome*? Their infamous *Croisadoes*, the cruel massacres of the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*, of whom they are said to have slain above nine hundred thousand.

In about 30 years from the first founding of the order of the *Jesuits*, above eight hundred thousand of the *protestants* were put to death, by the hand of the executioner only ; besides great numbers that perished several other ways, of whom we have now no particular account remaining : The *duke of Alva* boasted of his having, in a few years, cut off six and thirty thousand in *Belgium*.

^c Rev. xi. 8. and xvii. 5.

The horrible and infernal court of *inquisition*^a is said, in about 30 years to have consumed 150,000 by various kinds of torments; and still remains in *Spain*, *Portugal*, *Italy*, and other places, on purpose to hinder all free inquiry, and to keep mankind in the greatest ignorance, and most slavish subjection to an hierarchy of ambitious, lazy, and debauched priests.

The cruel burning of the martyrs in *England*; and the horrid and prodigious massacres in *France*, and *Ireland*, can never be forgot: No benevolent person can read the accounts without weeping eyes, and a bleeding heart.

Persecution is a distinguishing part of the character of this *apostate*. If to^c wear out the saints of the Most High, and to slay such as are^e witnessess for truth, liberty, and holiness, and against impositions, violence, and persecution; if to^f make war with the saints, and frequently to prevail against, and overcome them, and even to be^g drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus——can possibly be accomplished; it has been, and still is, accomplished by the cruel and tyrannical church of Rome.

And exalteth himself above all that is called a god, or even above the Imperial Dignity; that he himself, in the very temple of God, may sit upon his throne as a god, shewing that in reality he is a god.

The particular words and phrases are explained in the *Notes* on this fourth verse. And 'tis easy to point out the accomplishment of this part of the prophesy also.

How proudly have the *bishops* of Rome thus exalted themselves; and with pleasure heard themselves called, by their flatterers and vile dependants, *king of kings, and lord of lords!* by whom *princes reign, and upon whom the right of kings depends!* Nay, theⁱ canonists stile him, *Our lord god, the pope.* And they have acted accordingly, absolving subjects from their allegiance to their lawful prince, fomenting and raising rebellions, deposing or murdering rightful princes, and setting up others in their stead. With what pride and haughtiness have they called *emperors* their *vassals*, and even obliged some of them to hold the bridle, or stirrup, till the pope has mounted his horse; or to bear up his train.

^a Such as would see an authentic account of the rise and progress of the *Inquisition*, and of the inhumane treatment, that such as differ from the *church* of Rome, there meet with; let them read *Limborch's History*, &c. lately translated by Mr. *Chandler*.

^c Dan. vii. 25. ^f Rev. xi. 7, 8. ^g Ib. xiii. 4—7. ^h Ib. xvii. 6.
ⁱ Distinct. 96. c. satis evidenter.

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after him, when his holiness has pleased to walk in a pompous procession? Nay, with what amazing insolence have they whipt kings and sovereign princes; and even set their foot upon an emperor's neck? They have claimed the sole right of nominating, investing or confirming, the princes and rulers of the earth. And,

If this was not to exalt himself above all that is called a god, or an emperor; there can be no event to answer this, or any prophesy whatever. But, suppose that by Σεσάρια should be understood, objects of, or things pertaining to religious worship; does not the bishop of Rome claim the sole power of ordaining sacraments, consecrating altars and images, canonizing whom he pleases for saints, and to appoint what sort of religious worship shall be paid, as well as to whom? otherwise, how comes it to pass that the Virgin Mary is more frequently worshipped than the

GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST?

Is not this evidently a religious tyranny, founded in, and still supported by the pretence of religion? Others have sometimes called in religion for a pretence; and laid aside that pretence, when their purpose has been served; but none besides this have been intirely founded in, and all along carried on, merely under a pretence to religion: Of this the APOSTLE has exactly prophesied, by saying, that he would sit in the temple of God (not a God, but) as a God; i. e. (*in ordine ad spiritualia*) under a pretence of being the head of the true^{*} church, and having all spiritual power, he would thus exalt himself. And, I need not say, That under this colour, the bishops of Rome have claimed a most exorbitant power: And that this their kingdom is diverse¹ from all kingdoms. For other princes rule, in their own dominions, by their temporal power; but they, under the notion of spiritual power, claim obedience in kingdoms and countries, where a foreign temporal prince could have no claim. So that (though he does not directly pretend to be a god, or a temporal prince, yet) he shows himself to be one, and, in reality, possessed of equal, or greater power.

Vain and frivolous is the argument that Bellarmine would draw from our saying, *That the Christian church is the temple of the true God*: "Then (says he) the church of Rome must be the church of "God; for there the Pope sitteth upon his throne.

* See August. de Civit. Dei, l. 20. c. 19.

¹ Dan. vii. 23.

'Tis so, indeed, just in the same sense that an ^m adulterous woman may be called a wife: Or, as the greatest corruptions may retain the names that were given in the times of the primitive simplicity and purity.

Ver. 6. *And ye know what now hindreth, that he may be revealed in his own proper season.]* That the Roman emperor was the obstructing power, is highly probable. (See Note on this verse.) And 'tis very remarkable, that upon this account the primitive Christians used to pray for the continuance of the Roman empire, viz. to hinder the appearance of Antichrist. Tertullian (who flourished in the conclusion of the second century) says, "Now the mystery of iniquity worketh; only he who letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way: What is this (says he) but the Roman empire?" And St. Jerome, when he heard that Rome was taken by Alaricus, the Goth, allowed that he expected the appearance of Antichrist, upon the removal of the Roman empire; and wondered that it was not more speedy: For (says he) he that hindered is taken out of the way; and yet we don't understand that Antichrist approaches.

I might quote more from the fathers; but these expressions are so remarkably plain, that (if one could depend upon any oral traditions) one would almost believe that the primitive Christians had received this by apostolical tradition.

It may be worth while to compare, with what has been said, Rev. xiii. 2, 3. and xvii. 9, 10, 11. and if St. John there prophesied of the same thing, their tradition was not merely oral.

Ver. 7. *For the mystery of iniquity already worketh; only there is one that obstructeth, until he be taken out of the way: Or (as some would render it) until he ceases to interpose.*

'Tis impossible for us to know more of the tendency towards this grand apostasy, in the APOSTLES' days, than they have mentioned in their writings. Hymeneus and Alexander subverted the Christians by teaching false doctrines. Diotrephes aspired after the preeminence. Demas overloved the present world. Some, by a false humility, fell into the worship of angels: Others are charged with making a gain of godliness; and others again, with placing religion in a distinction between meats and drinks, and in the observation of days, and weeks, and months, and years; not considering that the kingdom of God consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

^m Rev. xvii. 1, 2, &c.
de Monogam.

ⁿ De Refus. Carn. c. 24.

^o Ad Geront.

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As we know what the *apostasy* is, at its height; we may justly conclude, that every corruption in worship, faith, or practice, was a making way for this *apostasy*, somewhat of the spirit of the *man of sin*, &c. or the *mystery of iniquity then working*.

And (according to this part of the *prophecy*) 'tis well known that they have not arrived to their *grand corruption*, but step by step; and at the first by slow, and almost insensible degrees.

And then shall be revealed that wicked one, or lawless person. And Ver. 8. 'tis notoriously plain, that the removal of the *Roman emperors* did open the way for the advancement of the *bishop of Rome*, to his power and grandeur. *Then was the wicked one signally revealed.*

O ἄρρενες, That lawless person. How proper a title for him, who hath been declared to be subject to no law; but by the plenitude of his power to make right wrong, and wrong right; to make virtue vice, and vice virtue; to dispense with all laws, human or divine; and that he may do all things above law, against law, and without law!

(*Whom the LORD will destroy with the Spirit of his mouth, and Ver. 8. will utterly abolish with the brightness of his coming.*) This ought to be read in a parenthesis ((see Note (v) on this verse) and then it can't hence be inferred, that the *man of sin*, &c. was to be destroyed immediately upon his appearance. Possibly the first sentence may refer to the destruction of him, and his kingdom, in this world, and answer to *Rev. xi. 13.* and *xiv. 6—10.* and *xv. 1, &c.* and *xvii. 16, 17.* and *xviii. 1, 2, &c.* and *xix. 15—21.* and the latter sentence to his final destruction at the last day, and answer to *Rev. xx. 10.* But I lay no stress upon this conjecture, only mention it as what deserves to be inquired into; nor was it uncommon for our *LORD and his Apostles*, first to hint a thing more generally and obscurely, and afterwards to explain it more largely and clearly.

'As the two last sentences were in a Parenthesis, we may go on as if they were not there; and then the sense will run thus:

When the obstructing power is removed, then shall be revealed Ver. 9. that wicked one; *whose coming shall be, by a diabolical energy,* with all power, and signs, and lying wonders;

And with the most fraudulent and unrighteous cheats; though none Ver. 10, need be deluded thereby, if they are lovers of truth and virtue. 11, 12.

The many pretences to *miracles* in the church of Rome has abundantly fulfilled this. They assert, that *churches have been moved into distant countries; that images have nodded, smiled,*

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frowned or spoken upon occasion ; that *blood* has been annually liquefied on a certain day of the year ; that the first convert St. *Gaul* made in *Germany*, was a bear ; that St. *Anthony of Padua* preached to a vast assembly of fish, whom he had miraculously called together, to hear the word of the *LORD*. That St. *Francis* preached with great success to birds and beasts ; which he thought our *LORD* had commanded, *Mark* xvi. 15.

Numberless have been the fictitious apparitions of souls departed, in order to prove such a state as *purgatory* ; nay, what have they not pretended to ? Voices from heaven and hell ; cures at the shrines of their saints ; or by their bones and reliks, to which they have sometimes ascribed a power to raise persons from the dead ? All the legends, and lying wonders, that the most diabolical invention could contrive, have been made use of to found and support this notorious *apostasy*.

For my own part, I greatly question the reality of all their miracles : But suppose any of them to have been real ; a *miracle* only shows that some being interposes, that is superior in power to man : And, as we must judge by the *doctrine* they would promote, whether the *miracles* are worked by a good or bad spirit ; 'tis evident, that (if they work any *real miracles*) they are assisted by a malevolent and wicked spirit, because they would thereby promote ignorance, falsehood and wickedness.

They have likewise, by the *most unrighteous deceit*, appeared as professed friends to *Christianity*, though really its greatest enemies ; have canonized men for saints that have been the most flagitious sinners ; and consecrated murders, treasons, massacres, and rebellions, by promising their *votaries* immediate entrance into heaven, suppose they should be cut off in perpetrating those black and horrid crimes.

'Twere endless to mention their pious frauds, and specious and astonishing methods to draw in the worst of men, and to discourage the best, to gratify their own exorbitant lust of power, riches, and ambition !

And must they *not believe lies*, that can delight in their monstrous and lying *legends* ; and tamely give up the *scriptures* ? and be under the strongest delusion and infatuation, that would defend or support such an *amazing apostasy* ?

* Addison's Travels, p. 284. Ibid. p. 47, &c.

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Thus I have briefly gone through the several parts of *this prophesy*, and shown (I think) that no *prophesy* can be more exactly accomplished. It may possibly be thought an objection to this interpretation, that St. PAUL has taken no notice of *this prophesy* in his epistle to the Romans; tho' that was the very place where the *man of sin*; &c. was to appear.

Answer. I will lay no great stress upon what he hath said, Rom. xi. 17 — 22. because it can't certainly be made appear that he had there any view to this *grand apostasy*. But it may be justly alledged, that St. PAUL had not planted this church himself, and therefore he speaks in a more condescending and reserved manner; that they had not fallen into this mistake about the *speedy coming of the day of the LORD*; and therefore there was no such particular reason to mention *this prophesy* in writing to them, as he had here for writing expressly to the *Thessalonians* about it. The church of Rome was not then an *apostate church*; nor the Christians then alive in any danger of so eminent an *apostasy*: And finally (what appears to me to be a consideration of great moment) the APOSTLE was cautious of speaking out, in an epistle to a church where he had never been, concerning the διάταξις, that which letted; which he must have done, or else they would not have understood him: Though I doubt not but, that when he came in person to *Rome*, he acquainted that church with *this prophesy*, as plainly and particularly as was wise and proper.

Corollaries. 1. From what hath been said, 'tis easy to judge concerning *popery*, and the *reformation*. 'Tis not the largeness of a church, nor her external pomp and grandeur, that makes her the *true church*; nor are they always the *Schismatics* that are the fewer in number. No, suppose all the nations of the earth should, generally, conspire together in maintaining absurd doctrines, immoral or unreasonable practices, uncharitableness and impositions; they are properly the *Hereticks* and *Schismatics*: And let the number that separates from them, in defence of truth and virtue, liberty and charity, be never so few — they are, in reality, the *true church*; and the other, only a *grand schism*, or *worldly faction*; even tho' their party be as numerous, as that with the soles of their feet they could dry up rivers.

Holding the truth in love, is a mark of the *true church*: And such as forsake this are *apostates*. Such is the *schism*, *faction*, and *apostasy* of the present church of Rome, that *mother of idolatries*, and of the *abominations of the earth*: And *reformation* is a most glorious

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glorious thing; when founded upon its right basis; of *reason* and *scripture*, *liberty* and *charity*.

2. How strong all argument may what hath been said; afford us for the truth of the *christian religion*? Here was a most signal event foretold, and that many ages before it came to pass: An event, the like to which had never happened since the creation of this world (and probably, there will never happen such another:) 'Twas therefore an event that was out of the reach of all human conjecture, or fore-light; and yet experience hath shown that the prediction was exact.

Neither *enthusiasts* nor *impostors* could possibly have guessed so agreeably to so uncommon an event; nor can we, that have lived to see so much of the accomplishment, describe this *apostasy* in a more concise, or lively manner, than St. PAUL has here done, and St. JOHN (as I apprehend) in the *Revelation*.

They therefore must have been *true prophets*, and *divinely inspired*, or else they could never have uttered such remarkable predictions; which time and fact have so exactly verified.

Some other arguments for the *truth of the Christian religion* (though just and conclusive) may be of a more subtle and difficult nature: But the rise and progress of this *apostasy* is a fact, a plain fact! an argument that cannot easily be evaded, but must strike all the virtuous and attentive! All *church history*, for several centuries past, is full of it; and we need but open our eyes, and we may behold too much of it: For the *man of sin*, &c. is even now upon his throne, exalting himself (as much as he can) above the kings of the earth; and with such strong delusions seducing the nations, as to make many of them to believe a lye: How often do we hear of the dismal effects of their cruel and persecuting spirit? Our ancestors felt it; and we have been in danger: Though the snare was broken, and we have escaped. Yet all pious and benevolent persons are daily mourning over it; and ready to say, *How long, O LORD, holy and just, wilt thou permit thine enemies to triumph; and not require the blood of thy martyrs at their hands?*

CHRISTIANITY is a religion reasonable in it self; promotes the purest virtue; was at first planted by *miracles*, and great plenty of *spiritual gifts*: And here is a remarkable prophecy, which (after so many hundred years) is exactly verified by a notorious event. What evidences would be sufficient, where all these are rejected!

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3. We ought not to be shocked at the present state of the Christian church; for such did THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD prophesy that it would be. Tho' the best things are liable to corruption; yet one would hardly have thought it possible, that so great, so notorious a corruption, could, by any pretences, have sprung out of the Christian religion.

Look into the New Testament, which contains the religion of Jesus, and look into the polity and constitution of the church of Rome; and you may easily perceive that light and darkness are not more unlike. The gospel every where requires the greatest virtue and purity; and this wicked church (that schismatically calls herself, *The only true church*) hath gotten so many arts to make men very religious, without any virtue or goodness at all, that it does every where encourage all manner of wickedness and abomination.

Daniel prophesied that the God of heaven would erect a kingdom, &c. that should be subject to the son of man. And we say, That this kingdom of righteousness was actually erected by OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

Now, upon looking abroad into a great part of Christendom, 'tis natural to inquire, Is this the kingdom prophesied of? No, to prevent such a difficulty, twas also prophesied, that out of this spiritual kingdom should arise one of the greatest apostasies and corruptions, that ever appeared in the world: Though true Christianity (as contained in the scriptures) hath all along been invariably the same.

4. How ought we to rejoice that this tyrannical and unrighteous power shall come to an end? and think our selves obliged in gratitude to do every thing in our power, towards bringing about so happy an event? Blessed be God that we are delivered from this worse than Egyptian darkness and slavery! Particularly, let us reflect, with gratitude, upon our late narrow escape, under the auspicious conduct of King William, of immortal memory; who (by the favour of a kind providence) laid the foundation for bringing in among us, the illustrious house of Hanover; a family, that were among the first protestors against popery, and that have ever since been Protestants; and (which is in a distinguishing manner, the glory of our present happy government, and attended with the greatest and most diffusive blessings—they are) strenuous assertors of liberty, both civil and religious: Blessed be God for such a royal family.—And let all the people say, AMEN. May

Dan. ii. 44. and vii. 13. 14.

they,

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they, and their descendants, continue friends to mankind, and lovers of truth, virtue, and liberty throughout all generations!

What madness must possess such as would bring us back again into this *spiritual Egypt*? when all wise men would avoid her, for fear of, at last, partaking in her plagues. 'Tis owing to our deliverance from this *mother of abominations*, that we have the *scriptures* so common, and in our own language; that we are allowed the liberty of private judgment, and blessed with so many excellent helps to understand our *Bible*; that we are not required to believe the grossest absurdities, and practise the most flagrant *idolatries*; and that upon pain of forfeiting all that is dear to us in this world, and of being sentenced to *eternal damnation* in the next.

The most acceptable way of testifying our gratitude to ALMIGHTY GOD, for so great a deliverance, is to study the *scriptures* with care, and practise accordingly; and to allow others that liberty of private judgment that we our selves desire; to avoid uncharitableness towards such as differ from us, and a persecuting spirit in all the branches and degrees of it; to lay the great stress of *religion* where the *scriptures* have laid it (not in abstruse notions, and unintelligible subtleties; not in forms and ceremonies, or any positive institutions; nor in an empty profession of the purest and best religion, but) upon the sincere love of GOD, and one another; upon a due governing our passions and sensual appetites, and the habitual practice of universal holiness. For what signifies it, what *church* any man belongs to, what profession of religion he makes, or what advantages he enjoys; if he don't love GOD and keep his commandments; if he abuse his liberty to licentiousness, and, in the midst of such light, show that he loveth darkness, by leading a scandalous and wicked life; which, of all others, is the blackest *heresy*, and most flagrant and notorious *corruption* and *apostasy*!

The END.



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